



PHD

The Intersection of Motherhood Identity with Culture and Class: a Qualitative Study of East Asian Mothers in England

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The Intersection of Motherhood Identity with Culture and Class: a Qualitative Study of East Asian Mothers in England

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**University of Bath
Department of Social and Policy Sciences**

January 2012

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Abstract

This study explores the accounts of first generation East Asian mothers living in England, for the purpose of examining if and how these women perceive their national and/or ethnic cultural heritage has affected their experiences and identity formation. In order to achieve this aim, the thesis investigates the gendered division of labour within the family and discourse around motherhood and employment, using biographical interviews with 30 first generation East Asian mothers with children under the age of 11. I develop an integrative theoretical framework by deploying various theories in order to analyse the complex and dynamic characteristics of identity formation for ethnic minority mothers. The concepts I draw on are ideology and discourse, storytelling and ‘othering’, patriarchy, masculinity and femininity, nation, *ethnie*, culture, class and intersectionality. The data was analysed by using discourse analysis, focusing on discursive themes across interview data, in conjunction with detailed narrative analysis of the individual life stories of four of the women.

The findings of the data indicated that despite the increasing involvement of male partners in childcare and domestic work, women’s stories suggested that they continued to take on the majority of household labour. In addition, this pattern was more prominent among East Asian couples than mixed ethnic couples. This is suggestive of the persistent influence of the Confucian patriarchal norms among East Asian couples outside East Asia. Alongside this, the examination of discourse and narratives around motherhood and employment indicated that the motherhood ideologies of individual women, influenced by national and/or ethnic cultural heritage, had a major impact on mothers’ decision towards childcare and employment. For example, the majority of mothers from Korea and some mothers from Japan tended to endorse an intensive mothering ideology, in which women were expected to stay at home devoting their time and energy to looking after their children. The talk of home-stay mothers was dominated by the importance of the mother’s care for the psychological wellbeing of their children. In this discourse the mother’s absence was portrayed as having a detrimental effect on the healthy development of young children. But rather than referring to a Western notion of intensive motherhood (see Hays 1996), they talked of their decisions in reference to the way that mothers and fathers were expected to

act in their country of origin. This contrasted with the discourse of employed mothers (especially from China), which did not necessarily support the incessant presence and availability of mothers for children, regarding childcare as replaceable by others, such as grandparents. The Chinese women talked of this in reference to their perception of the culture in China where all adults are expected to work, regardless of childcare responsibilities. However, despite notable differences in discourse around 'good' mothering and employment between home-stay mothers and employed mothers, the gendered idea about men's and women's roles seemed to continue to affect the predominant majority of women in my study, irrespective of their employment status. Hence, both home-stay and most employed mothers remained to be the primary care provider as well as taking the major burden of household labour, being subject to a gendered understanding of motherhood and womanhood.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Why Study First Generation East Asian Mothers in England

There is a plethora of literature on women's experiences of motherhood in the UK (Lewis 1991; Duncan and Edwards 1999; Bailey 1999, 2000; Vincent, Ball and Pietkainen 2004; England 2005; Gatrell 2007; Haynes 2008). However, few studies have been conducted regarding the experiences of ethnic minority women living in the UK, particularly those of East Asian women. As a group in general, East Asians living in the UK are under researched although there are a few studies of Chinese immigrants who make up the highest percentage among the East Asian ethnic minorities (e.g. Jones 1979, 1987; Watson 1977; Parker 1995; Pang and Lau 1998; Song 2003, 2005). Also, there exists literature on the experiences of East Asian women living in East Asian countries (Yuen-Tsang 1997; Rofel 1999; Hirao 2001; Sung 2003; Kim 2005; Cho 2008). Though these provide a valuable contribution towards enhancing the understanding of this group of women, these studies cannot provide direct contextual information on the experiences of East Asian women living in the UK since individuals' experiences can differ considerably depending on the social setting where they are located. The study carried out by Dale, Lindley and Dex (2006) using the British Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) clearly highlights that there are substantial differences between ethnic groups in their understanding of motherhood and its subsequent influence on their labour market participation. Whilst this study has given some insight into the significant role played by ethnicity in individual women's experiences of motherhood, it has not delved into the lived experiences of ethnic minority women. In particular, the use of already existing official survey data seems to put more limitations on the inclusion of other ethnic minorities, such as Japanese and Korean, who are not officially categorised in the British ethnic groups.

1.1.1 East Asia and Confucianism

East Asian countries refer to China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, South and North¹ Korea, which have been influenced by the Confucianism that originated from ancient China. Confucianism denotes the ancient Chinese tradition that had a huge impact on the cultural formation of East Asian countries, which began during the political and cultural expansion of the Han dynasty (Oldstone-Moore 2003). The Confucian tradition in actuality began well before Confucius (the latinised name of Kong Fuzi, “Master Kong” (Oldstone-Moore 2003)), but it was Confucius who established Confucianism as a set of prominent ideological principles by reinterpreting, refining and reformulating the tradition (Clements 2004). Confucianism espouses the belief that human relationships are fulfilled through the idea of a natural hierarchy, bringing them in accordance with cosmic patterns, which will, in a ripple effect, bring harmony to all of society, and eventually to the cosmos. The most crucial relationships in Confucian principles have been identified as those between parents and child, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, friends, and ruler and subject (Lau 1979; Oldstone-Moore 2003). Amongst these, filial piety is regarded as the lynchpin of Confucian virtue: parents have a duty to take care of a child with the provision of education, care, and moral formation, while a child has an obligation to be obedient, respectful and to look after his parents in old age and after death (Lau 1979; Oldstone-Moore 2003; Bell 2008).

Within the patrilineal kinship systems of Confucianism, married women are positioned at the lower rung of the family hierarchy (Won and Pascall 2004) and regarded as belonging to their husbands’ family (Gelb and Palley 1994; Kim 2005). A husband and wife also have a duty to care for each other. However, based on strong patriarchal ideals, Confucianism endorses highly gender divided roles, with the husband protecting and providing, and the wife being obedient and taking responsibilities for the household (Lau 1979; Chen 1986). This confinement of women to the domestic sphere has particular implications for their motherhood as it lays the foundation for intensive mothering. Within the Confucian patriarchal system looking after children is mainly seen as the role and duty

¹ Although North Korea belongs to East Asia geographically, it has been excluded in this study (see chapter 4 for a more detailed explanation). Thus, the word Korea is most of the time used in order to refer to South Korea throughout the thesis.

of the mother, who is expected to put her individual desire aside and raise her children with devotion, ensuring the healthy development of their mind and body (Keum 2003) as well as their academic success (Cho 2002). Along with these principles, Confucian ideals include ‘the desire for children, family togetherness and harmony’ (Oldstone-Moore 2003: 75) and a strong emphasis on the salience of education (Lau 1979; Chen 1986; Oldstone-Moore 2003; Clements 2004). According to Inoguchi and Shin (2009:184), Confucian principles give primacy to ‘family and community over the individual, discipline and hierarchy over freedom and equality, and consensus and harmony over diversity and conflict’.

As a result of the influence of Confucian principles, East Asian countries have historically been sharing cultural similarities (Yi and Nauck 2006) whilst an individual country has its own unique socio, economic and political characteristics (Ebrey et al. 2006). Reflecting this, many studies have been conducted in order to investigate the impact of Confucianism on the lives of women in East Asian countries (Yuen-Tsang 1997; Sung 2003; Brinton et al. 2001; Kim 2005; Pascall and Sung 2007). However, a lack of attention paid to East Asians in England has led to an absence in understanding the effect of a Confucian legacy on the lived experiences of East Asian women outside East Asia, as well as on their identities. Therefore, by setting out to study the discourses and narratives utilised and constructed by East Asian mothers in England, this research aims to shed new light on the experiences of this minority group and fill in a gap in the existing literature.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The prime purpose of this study is to explore if and how first generation East Asian mothers perceive that their national and/or ethnic cultural heritage affects their motherhood experiences and identity formation in England. In order to achieve this aim, three main objectives were set:

1. To examine if they perceive their national and/or ethnic cultural heritage to have shaped their motherhood ideology, and if so, how they represent this impacting on their experiences of motherhood and employment in England;

2. To investigate if and how their husbands' ethnicity has been perceived to influence the gendered division of household labour (including childcare) within their family in England;
3. To study how individual identity emerges through the intersection of motherhood identity with their ethnicity and class².

By obtaining a detailed understanding of how East Asian women make sense of their experience in England, this study will contribute firstly to existing research on East Asian women, and develop this by examining these women's similar as well as divergent experiences. Given that the majority of existing studies of East Asian women tend to focus on one country, the simultaneous investigation of three different groups of East Asian mothers' experiences is expected to provide invaluable insight into their commonalities as well as diversities. Undoubtedly this will make a significant contribution to East Asian studies, which have been less prolific in Britain. Providing a deeper understanding of East Asian women's accounts by using life history interviews with 30 first generation East Asian mothers, this research will also help to develop theory relating to the gendered experiences of motherhood further, with specific reference to ethnic minority mothers in England.

1.3. Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is structured in the following way: in chapter 2, I examine existing studies in relation to motherhood and employment as well as the division of household labour in both

² In the discussion of intersectionality scholars tend to talk more about class when working-class stories are involved, indicating that those of middle-class are treated as the 'norm', similar to the discussion of ethnicity for white people. However, Byrne (2006) in her investigation of white middle-class women's experiences of mothering in the UK, highlighted the intersecting relationships between gender, class and 'race'. In this, she suggested that even for middle-class white women we should see their experiences of motherhood based on its intersection with class and ethnicity. Similar to her case, my participants are dominantly middle-class (see chapter 4) and as a result the findings of my study are more about the representation of middle-class East Asian women's stories rather than comparison between those of middle- and working-class. However, drawing on Byrne's (2006) example, it seems important for my study to underscore how motherhood identity emerges not only through the interacting relations with ethnicity but also with the class position of East Asian mothers in England.

Western and Eastern contexts. The first section presents literature on motherhood and employment in Western countries and the second section focuses on motherhood and employment experiences in East Asian countries. The second part of this chapter investigates the gendered division of household labour and its impact on women's lived experiences. Similar to the first part, it begins with the examination of Western literature and then moves onto the studies based in East Asian societies. The final part examines the experiences of East Asian migrant women, particularly focusing on the implications of migration on gender identity and relations for women. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework adopted in this study. In this chapter I put forward an integrative theoretical framework that combines a number of different approaches in order to achieve a most effective way of understanding the complexities of identity development for East Asian mothers living in England. The first part investigates ideology and discourse, followed by storytelling and othering as important ways of constructing identity. The second part examines intersectionality: the first section of this part is devoted to the discussion of the concepts of patriarchy, masculinity and femininity; the second section provides the examination of debates about a nation, *ethnie* and culture in understanding diasporic³ experiences of individuals; the third section discusses the concept of class and its continuing relevance in social enquiry; the final section brings these all together by examining the concept of intersectionality. In chapter 4, I present the methodology employed in my research. After introducing ontological and epistemological approaches of the study based on a female centred feminist approach, I examine the life history method, ensued by the presentation of the sampling, data collection and data analysis methods taken in my study. This will be followed by the discussion of ethical issues involved in the study and reflection on my research methods. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 provide the findings of this study. Chapter 5 focuses on discourse around the gendered division of household labour, in which the ethnic origins of husbands emerged in the women's stories as playing an important part in gendered relations. Chapter 6 presents narrative accounts and the discourse of home-stay mothers, who advocated an intensive mothering ideology. Chapter 7 examines narrative accounts and the discourse of employed mothers, who supported mothers' participation in the labour market, unlike their home-stay counterparts. In chapter 8, I draw all these findings together by discussing them extensively in relation to existing

³ Here diaspora is used in a broader sense, meaning migration of people from country to country, instead of the original meaning of the dispersion of Jews.

literature and theories. Finally, in this chapter I also review my research overall, reflect upon its limitations as well as make recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2. Motherhood and Gender

This chapter presents findings and debates identified in existing studies, focusing on four main topics that are related to the experiences of East Asian mothers living in England. The first section examines issues around motherhood and employment, particularly the conflicting characteristics of culturally dominant forms concerning the ideology of motherhood and work. Given that this study has specific interests in mothers with East Asian heritage, the second section presents the experiences of mothers in East Asian contexts. The third section discusses research on men's participation in household labour and its implications for the gendered division of family work in Western and East Asian countries. The final section presents existing scholarly work on the experiences of East Asian migrant women in order to provide the contextual information on what kinds of implications migration might have for East Asian mothers in my study.

2.1 Motherhood and Employment in Western Contexts

Over the last fifty years a plethora of literature on motherhood and employment has been published. Many studies have indicated that the concept of motherhood in Western societies is a highly idealised social construct, which puts a considerable amount of strain on mothers. In particular, Hays (1996) argued that within the ideology of the 'good' mother, women with young children are expected to sacrifice their own interests in order to provide intensive care for their children, which poses serious challenges for those who want to combine caring responsibilities with paid work. As a result, she argued, mothers are either forced to choose between family and participation in the labour market, or they have to redefine the ideology of 'good' mothering and work to deal with conflicting notions of motherhood and employment if they try to combine the two. On the basis of this, this section presents four main themes identified in the existing literature, which include: the 'idealised motherhood' ideology; the clash between the 'idealised mother' and 'idealised worker' ideology; conflicting notions of combining motherhood and work; and 'gendered moral rationality'.

2.1.1 ‘Idealised Motherhood’ Ideology

Berger and Luckmann (1966: 195) denoted identity as ‘a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic between individual and society.’ Motherhood as an identity reflects personal and social reality (McMahon 1995; Woodward 1997; Haynes 2008), as Hockey and James (2003: 10) suggested that:

A young woman’s experience of motherhood and her taking on the role of, or an identity as, ‘mother’...though a unique event for her as an individual, is also one which reflects and reproduces the symbolic meanings and practical realities through which other births and the making of mothers has taken place within her culture.

Freeden (2003) proposed that individuals make sense of their surrounding world through the lens of a particular ideology. Hence, we understand motherhood through a set of beliefs that are presented to us within a particular historical and cultural milieu (Lawler 1996). This implies that ideology entails subjective and interpretative characteristics that promote a particular set of ideas over others (Glenn 1994; Freeden 2003). In developed Western societies the idealised image of a mother who is selflessly giving has been said to dominate the discourse of motherhood (Crittenden 2001; Blair-Loy 2001; Douglas and Michaels 2005; Wall 2010; Loke et al. 2011), and some authors have argued that this is a result of the organisation of paid employment around the needs of men since the advent of industrialisation (Garey 1999).

It is suggested that within this paradigm an ‘ideal’ mother is expected to provide intensive care for her children, setting her other personal interest aside (Hays 1996; Douglas and Michaels 2005; Johnston and Swanson 2004, 2006, 2007; Riggio 2008; Loke et al. 2011). According to Hays (1996), the intensive mothering ideology prevalent in developed Western countries is exclusively child-centred and demands an immense amount of mothers’ time, energy and finance. Within this ideology the mother is seen as the best individual who can provide their undivided time and energy for the emotional, physical and the intellectual development of their children (Hays 1996). In a similar vein, based on their examination of middle-class mothers in London, Vincent et al. (2004) suggested that all the mothers carefully and selectively followed expert advice on child rearing; they were

also very careful in choosing the right childcare arrangements or schools for their children; additionally, they took their children to various organised activities, which were considered to be beneficial for the physical, psychological and cognitive development of their children. In a similar fashion, Wall (2010) investigated the ways in which middle-class Canadian mothers were engaged in intensive mothering linked to the discourse of brain development. Drawing on her data, Wall maintained that all the women were involved in intensive mothering, spending an ample amount of time aimed at achieving the enhancement of their children's intelligence. However, many of their accounts concurrently indicated that their understanding of the discourse not only meant development in the brain but also the enhanced self-esteem and happiness of their children. In addition, analogous with mothers in Vincent et al. (2004), those mothers were selective in taking expert advice, only adapting what would fit with their parenting philosophies. Furthermore, play was regarded by some mothers as significant for children's development; thus, while most of the mothers arranged a number of structured lessons and activities for their children, they put a limit on these, trying to keep the balance with play time.

These studies indicate that these Western mothers were engaged in what is constructed as 'good' mothering practices, trying to live up to the social expectation of 'ideal' motherhood. However, while motherhood is highly idealised, Crittenden (2001) and Miller (2005) argued that the mothering role in Western societies is undervalued and seen as inferior to economic activities. According to Crittenden (2001), not only is mothers' care-giving work not rewarded, but it is also penalised.

2.1.2 Clash between 'Idealised Mother' and 'Idealised Worker' Ideology

On the other hand, the notion of the ideal worker is thought to be founded upon 'a worker who works full-time and overtime and takes little time or no time off for childbearing or child rearing' (Williams 2000: 1). In particular, Haynes (2008) and Gallhofer et al. (2011) suggested that the ethos of the private sector, often found in the financial sector of the City, demands the prioritisation of economic activities over non-economic activities with strong commitment to work at a substantial personal cost. The 'ideal' employee is thought to be

one who has no family commitments, and thus is flexible and mobile (Vincent et al. 2004). Within this definition women with caring responsibilities become excluded or marginalised in the market place (Gatrell 2007); they are seen as less committed to their jobs (Haynes 2008; Gallhofer et al. 2011); and they become 'matter out of place' (Douglas 1966). This clash between the idealised representation of motherhood and worker is said to permeate Western cultures, posing a significant challenge to women in modern society and their identities, more so than for men (Hays 1996). Venker (2004) and Loke et al. (2011) claimed that this is especially so because conventional views still maintain that women cannot be successful in their career if they are to fulfill the traditional notion of motherhood. Thus, for the majority of women the choice of 'having their cake and eating it' does not seem to be available easily. For example, the findings of Blair-Loy's (2001) study of women with high-ranking finance related jobs in the USA suggested that a large number of women who wanted to achieve success in their careers and who had a strong worker identity decided to remain childless. In this study, those opting out of maternity believed that it was impossible to combine their professional identity with a maternal identity due to opposing demands from the two roles. This is, to some extent, echoed in the research of Maher and Saugeres (2007), through which they explored the influence of dominant discourses of mothering on women's decisions about having children in Australia. According to their findings, the majority of voluntarily childless women in the study were afraid that motherhood might take over their other priorities, disrupt their lives and take away their identities. On the other hand, McMahon (1995) indicated that remaining childless for women is not an easy option because childbearing is regarded as a cultural norm. Maher and Saugeres (2007) added that women without children are seen as abnormal or emotionally deficient. This may be why childless women in the study of Maher and Saugeres (ibid.) tended to justify their decision of not having children while women with children were not always clear about their reasons for having children. The results indicated that women were still affected by the cultural discourses of womanhood centred on motherhood and the idealised portrayal of the mothering role.

While some women choose not to have children as a way of dealing with the colliding notions of work and motherhood, the majority of women still opt for becoming a mother. Mirroring this trend, there is a large amount of literature focusing on the experiences of women with children, in particular those in paid employment (e.g. Jarvis 1999; Blair-Loy

2001; Vincent, et al. 2004; Haynes 2008; Thomson et al. 2011). The majority of existing literature is based on how women experience the self while trying to reconcile a newly acquired identity as 'mother' with an existing identity as 'worker' owing to contrasting cultural expectations of the two roles (Vincent et al. 2004). Haynes's (2008) research on motherhood experiences of professional female accountants in the UK illustrated how social and cultural factors shape and restrict the women's experiences of balancing their professional identity with their newly obtained maternal identity. In this study the practice of motherhood became more complicated by the tensions between an intensive mothering ideology and the highly male dominant market demands on professionals. Analogously, the research of Vincent et al. (2004) on middle-class mothers in London explored how the professional women experience the changes in their self-identity and how they negotiate the tensions between their two roles as mother and worker. The findings showed that some women gave up their jobs as a strategy to resolve the strain while others tried to combine the two, either working part-time or full-time. Those who decided to stay at home displayed a strong desire to look after their children themselves. This group of women saw caring for their children as a responsibility or a moral duty of mothers. However, for some the decision to stay at home was also accompanied by a certain degree of anxiety about losing self and identity. By comparison, mothers in employment in Vincent et al.'s (ibid.) research regarded their job as a vital means to define themselves as well as to contribute to society by participating in the public sphere, not just in the private arena of home. In addition, employment was described as providing a sense of financial freedom. Further, working mothers were said to embrace the discourse of 'happy mother and happy child' whereby a mother's engagement with an activity outside childcare was seen as benefiting a mother's as well as her children's emotional wellbeing. Thus, similar to the middle-class women in the study of McMahon (1995), working mothers in Vincent et al.'s study appeared to try and have what McMahon (ibid.: 153) called 'commitment without engulfment'. However, as commonly identified, employed mothers constantly faced ideological and practical difficulties because of contrasting demands from home and work arenas.

2.1.3 Conflicting Notions of Combining Motherhood and Work

Johnston and Swanson (2004), through their interviews with at-home, part-time and full-time working mothers with pre-school children in the USA, investigated the 'Mother War' rhetoric between home-stay mothers and working mothers. Their findings were highly illustrative of the existence of the 'Mother War' rhetoric between mothers with different work status. Their analysis of mothers' narratives indicated stereotypical views held by mothers about other mothers with different work status. Interestingly, part-time employed mothers associated themselves with at-home mothers in distancing and objectifying full-time employed mothers. For example, full-time employed mothers were said to be negatively portrayed by both at-home and part-time employed mothers as individuals with a smart suit and briefcase in hand who put their personal interests before the needs of their children. Even if they all shared the common identity as mother, the depiction of full-time employed mothers observed by Johnston and Swanson (*ibid.*) was mainly grounded on their images or superficial appearances, rather than their personal qualities. Compared to this, the description of at-home mothers by employed mothers appeared rather ambivalent, seeing them as more person-centred and as individuals with feelings and desires, whilst also portraying them with stereotypical images, either as more creative or lacking in ambition. Meanwhile, both groups of mothers expressed that their national culture was more supportive of the other group. Based on this, Johnston and Swanson (2004) claimed that such a perceived dearth of cultural validation was in line with the dichotomisation of the divergent employment status of women persisted by the 'Mother War' rhetoric.

Founded on the above findings, Johnston and Swanson (2006, 2007) further explored how mothers construct and reconstruct their mother and worker identity within the competing ideologies of 'good' mothering. For at-home mothers constant availability and the amount of time mothers spend with their children were seen as significant in making a 'good' mother. Hence, the majority of stay-home mothers made the decision to stay at home on the basis of this ideological conviction. By comparison, part-time employed mothers constructed accessibility as periodic quality interaction with their children, as opposed to the incessant presence of mothers. For full-time employed mothers 'good' mothering was described in relation to psychological and emotional accessibility, instead of physical availability, although they also expressed that they could be better mothers if they had

more time for their children. At-home mothers, Johnston and Swanson (2006) suggested, viewed a happy child as a product of a 'good' mother whilst working mothers embraced the discourse of 'a happy mother makes a happy child.' They indicated that the majority of working mothers believed that mothers should have identities outside motherhood. Supporting this view to some extent, stay-home mothers in these studies reported feeling isolated and missing social interaction with adults. Their studies also suggested that part-time working mothers were the happiest group due to the sense of balance they felt in the process of reconciling motherhood and employment. On the other hand, full-time employed mothers were less happy than their part-time counterparts because of their desire to spend more time with their children. While at-home mothers were said to have resolved work-family tension by choosing the family sphere, part-time working mothers were thought to have dealt with the tension by either separating the home from the work sphere or compromising their career for family needs. In comparison, the accounts of full-time employed mothers indicated how childcare responsibilities impinge on the work space and the difficulties of separating work and home mentally. In order to integrate the two conflicting roles, they argued, full-time working mothers employed various mental strategies, such as reframing or redefining the meanings of a 'good' mother and a 'good' worker, or segregating mother identity from worker identity. The studies suggested that mothers' decision-making towards work status was influenced by dominant ideologies but simultaneously new ideologies were also produced through the process of combining motherhood and work.

Bailey's (2000) research on middle-class working mothers in the Bristol area in the UK also indicated the tension between worker identity and mother identity. For example, a pregnant professional woman in her study had been reluctant to tell her employer about her pregnancy since motherhood was perceived as breaking a norm in the male dominant working environment. Similar to other studies (Gatrell 2007; Haynes 2008; Riggio 2008), having children for women was seen in association with diminished commitment at work while this was not necessarily the case for men. Nonetheless, her findings were suggestive of continuities between worker and mother identity. They indicated that the mother-worker identity for the women in her study was not necessarily conflictual, and that the women might have a degree of agency in negotiating the relationship between these two. Drawing from this, Bailey (2000) argued that there are commonalities between work and maternity

while these two appear to put conflicting demands on women. For instance, both mothering and work were represented in the language of their interest and value; both were also described as involving responsibility and stability. She used Giddens (1991) to argue that motherhood was seen as part of 'the project of the self' alongside their paid employment. Also, Bailey (2000), using her concept of 'inter-speciality,' contended that working identity and mothering identity for her respondents were intertwined, rather than being simply contrasted with one another. The argument put forward by Bailey seems to be in parallel with Garey's (1999) concept of 'interweaving.' Drawing from her interviews with female hospital employees in the USA, Garey (ibid.) challenged the dichotomous portrayal of women as 'work orientated' or 'family orientated,' which, she argued, failed to capture the experience of a large number of working mothers who constantly interweave their work and family. The workplace and home sphere were not conceptualised as two discrete sites yet rather as a location for the constant interplay between the two; therefore, individuals wove the discourses of work into those of motherhood in constituting a sense of self. These findings are consistent with those of Morehead's (2001) study about mothers employed at a hospital in Canberra, Australia. According to her findings, there was a constant interaction between mothering and working, either while at work or while at home. Thus, the line between work and mothering became overlapped and blurred. For example, some participants in the study checked on their children while at work, by phoning them. Also, caring responsibilities at home meant the continuation of their working role as nurses. On the basis of this, Morehead rejected a dualistic approach towards motherhood and work. Instead, she employed the notion of 'synchronisation' – that is, 'mothers might be experiencing (and doing) mothering and working while at work, and working and mothering while at home' - in order to explain the entwined relationship between employment and motherhood (2001: 358). In a similar way, Armstrong (2010) talked about the continuity between the mothering role and paid work among women engaged in caring work in the UK. Her interview data suggested that employment and mothering work are interrelated and thus the binary notion of private and public domains does not represent the experiences of a lot of working mothers appropriately.

2.1.4 ‘Gendered Moral Rationality’

Reflecting an ample amount of literature discussed so far, Duncan and Edwards (1999), drawing on their study of lone mothers in Britain, proposed that women’s decisions about childcare and paid employment are strongly influenced by cultural beliefs and norms of ‘good’ mothering, overriding their economic rationalities. Duncan and Edwards (ibid.) argued that the primary factor determining mothers’ behaviour towards the uptake of paid work is a socially and culturally negotiated idea about what is morally right and socially acceptable as a ‘good’ and responsible mother. These social and cultural understandings of ‘good’ mothering in association with caring responsibilities and participation in the labour market are called ‘gendered moral rationality’ (Duncan and Edwards 1999: 3). These moral forms of rationality are highly gendered since both motherhood and participation in paid employment are fundamentally gendered. In addition, they suggested that although these rationalities are held individually, they have to be negotiated in social contexts in which individual mothers are located. In this respect, local social networks play a significant part in the experiences of lone (and other) mothers not only as potential sources of material resources but on an ideological level. According to Duncan and Edwards (1999), social networks (e.g. kin/friendship networks) provide a sense of belonging, through which identities are negotiated and constructed. Hence, local norms and beliefs around what constitutes ‘good’ mothering are influential in the way mothers formulate their motherhood and worker identity.

Drawing on their examination of the impact of women’s increasing labour market participation on their understanding of caring duties and responsibilities for others, McDowell et al. (2005) also supported this gendered understanding of motherhood proposed by Duncan and Edwards. McDowell et al. argued that women’s decision towards care is shaped by individual women’s beliefs in what is a morally right form of mothering constructed through the nexus of relational ties within a particular local social context. Their findings therefore indicated that the women in their study showed varied ways of understanding mothering and care, depending on their locality as well as other social relations, such as class and ethnicity. However, McDowell et al. (2005) concluded that despite this variability, what they shared commonly was their commitment to care, which

was enmeshed in the gendered construction of women's identity, similar to the argument put forward by Duncan and Edwards (1999).

2.1.5 Gaps in the Existing Literature

The wide range of literature that has been reviewed so far is extremely valuable to get to grips with existing debate over motherhood and work. The individual literature has made an important contribution to the understanding of contested characteristics of motherhood in Western societies. However, as commonly found throughout the review, existing literature has substantially neglected the experiences of ethnic minority women. Even if ethnic minority women are included, their inclusion is minor and thus almost invisible. For example, Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson (2001) included some ethnic minority women in their study but without making any clear distinction from the majority of white Swedish mothers. Thus, it is very hard to tell whether there are any major differences in the experiences of motherhood and work between ethnic minority women and indigenous white Swedish mothers. Crosby and Hawkes (2007) in their comparative study of early employment in the UK and USA pointed out that the early employment patterns of both countries are related to mothers' ethnicity. For example, in the UK, their findings indicated that Indian mothers are less likely than white mothers to begin paid work between seven weeks and six months after the birth, and mothers of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage are least likely to be employed during the first nine months after giving birth. They concluded that ethnic minority women living in Western industrialised societies might have been influenced by different cultural ideologies of mothering and employment outside the dominant cultural beliefs of their host countries due to their association with the ethnic cultures in which they were raised. In order to obtain a contextualised understanding, the following section discusses the literature on the lived experiences of mothers in East Asian settings.

2.2 Motherhood and Employment in East Asian Contexts

This section presents findings from existing studies conducted in East Asian countries. It starts with the examination of Korean mothers' experiences, followed by Japanese and

Chinese mothers consecutively. The section on Chinese mothers is divided into subsections on experiences of mothers in China and Hong Kong. Throughout this section, the literature indicates that a pervasive impact of Confucianism characterises women's lives in all East Asian countries. In particular, literature suggests that ideologies of motherhood in East Asia have been affected by Confucian patriarchal ideals by placing emphasis on women's role as the nurturant and devoted mother (Cho 2002; Keum 2003).

2.2.1 Experiences of Korean Mothers

Drawing from interview data with Korean working mothers living in Korea, Choi (1994) argued that the rapid economic development and transition to modern society evident in South Korea had not been accompanied by changes in structural and cultural norms adequate to support such transition. From this position she suggested that mothers in her study, whether they were involved in economic activities, persisted in believing that they were primarily responsible for childcare and even those who engaged in paid employment, experienced role conflict and lack of support for their dual roles as mother and worker from wider social networks. This persistent influence of traditional beliefs and norms was similarly identified in the research of Sung (2003), which examined the experiences of Korean employed mothers in Korea. According to her findings, the traditional Confucian norms take a significant place in the lives of Korean working mothers, with the deeply seated presumption about women's primary role as a carer pervading every level of society, regardless of their employment status. Employed women with dependent children in her study therefore struggled in combining the double demands of childcare and employment without much support from their husbands or the state. This was again consistent with the study of Won and Pascall (2004), which investigated childcare policy and practice, and their implications for working mothers' experiences in Korea. Reminiscent of Sung's claim (2003), Won and Pascall described the daily lives of Korean mothers participating in the labour market as a 'war', trying to reconcile their employment and childcare with limited support from the government and Confucian influenced families. In particular, they suggested that gender norms deeply rooted in Confucian patriarchal ideals often forced women in their study to take sole responsibilities for childcare and housework even if they worked full-time. According to Won and Pascall (2004), these expectations of women to take primary responsibility for childcare and domestic work, whether they were in paid

employment or not, were perpetuated by their resistant husbands, endorsed by powerful mothers-in-law. They asserted that due to the Confucian ideals which are firmly founded on hierarchical human relationships (Oldstone-Moore 2003), many of their participants were not able to challenge their husbands or mothers-in-law (see also Kim 2001; Cho 2008). In addition, some women who received childcare support from their mothers-in-law expressed their discomfort and anxiety as their mothers-in-law were not always sympathetic towards their work outside the home, unlike their own mothers. Thus, Won and Pascall (2004) maintained that a lot of Korean mothers with paid work underwent multiple burdens (not only double) in order to maintain a seemingly harmonious surface within the family while battling underneath on a daily basis.

Echoing the findings from the above studies to some extent, the work of Kim (2005) indicated that mothers in Korea are subject to the dominant cultural expectations of an intensive mothering ideology. Her findings suggested that taking breaks from work in order to care for their children was the most prevalent form of reconciling work and motherhood, chosen by the majority of Korean mothers in the study. This is not surprising considering that women's labour market participation in Korea is typically depicted as M-shaped curve, which indicates a large number of women's temporary break from paid work during the period of child rearing (Brinton et al. 2004). Similar to the findings of several studies conducted in Western societies (e.g. McMahon 1995; Vincent et al 2004), her analysis of interviews suggested that taking breaks in order to fulfil an intensive mothering ideology was more strongly espoused by middle-class mothers who had enough resources to use various childcare arrangements than working-class mothers. Her data indicated that the majority of working-class mothers were to some degree forced to take breaks from work because they did not have any other alternative means to arrange childcare. Also, the precarious nature of their jobs, which were most likely to be related to the lowest position in the occupational hierarchy, meant that it was easy for them to move out of work without any risk of downward mobility. By comparison, middle-class mothers were found to take breaks from their career in order to look after their children themselves although they were able to organise alternative ways of providing childcare. Meanwhile, some mothers chose to reduce their working hours or change work places as a way of combining the two. For married women whose husbands were the main breadwinners, part-time work was seen as an ideal option to balance childcare and employment. Particularly, middle-class mothers viewed

part-time work as a way of satisfying the ideology of ‘good’ mothering whilst maintaining their career. In contrast with this, some working-class mothers were forced to choose part-time employment because they lacked resources in terms of familial support and finance. For these working-class mothers working part-time was the only option available to combine work and childcare.

Meanwhile, some mothers took career breaks in order to meet the educational needs of their children just before or when their children started primary school. As well as taking full responsibility for helping their children with their homework, these mothers were prepared to provide transportation for their children’s extracurricular activities, such as English classes and music lessons. According to Cho (2002), the often expensive and time-consuming characteristics of Korean educational practices impose an even heavier burden on mothers, who are considered to have the main responsibility for ensuring their children’s educational success in Korean society. In the meantime, Kim’s (2005) data suggested that dissimilar to those taking career breaks, some mothers with professional and intermediate professional jobs maintained their full-time employment status without any interruption. Mothers with highly professional careers in particular, she suggested, showed a strong worker identity alongside their maternal identity, and thus for them their jobs were seen as essential to define who they were. In order to meet the conflicting demands of motherhood and work, these women mobilised their family members, such as parents or parents-in-law, for childcare, or employed nannies and tutors who performed the role of a surrogate mother on their behalf. Kim described this group of mothers as ‘managers and organisers’ whose motherhood comprised arranging alternative providers for care and education, rather than directly involved in those practices. Yet, it is important to stress that even if they did not directly engage in childcare, it was the women who organised and managed childcare arrangements not their husbands.

2.2.2 Experiences of Japanese Mothers

The existing literature on the motherhood experiences of Japanese mothers is in many ways similar to that of Korean mothers. Gelb and Palley (1994) proposed that in Japan women are expected to disengage from paid work when they have a child, which causes the discontinuous trajectory of labour force participation for many Japanese women.

Similar to their Korean counterparts, Hirao (2001) suggested this is represented in the M-shaped curve of female employment patterns in Japan, which implies the incompatibility of paid employment with childcare responsibilities. According to Hirao (ibid.), such behaviour is widely supported by the public, with the most popular choice for Japanese women being to leave the labour force upon marriage or upon childbirth. Consonant with this, White (1987) claimed that there is a clear dichotomy in women's and men's places in Japan – i.e. the former within the domestic sphere and the latter within the public arena of work outside the home. In this dichotomisation women are expected to devote their lives to their husbands and children. According to White (1987), Japanese women in her study felt socially valued and fulfilled their lives by dedicating their time and energy to raising their children successfully. Such value placed on Japanese women's role as a mother originates from the national consensus that children are the most important asset and education is the most significant job of the country. Hence, she reported on the dominant view that the 'wise mother' should commit herself to the nurturance and education of her children (White 1987). In this milieu few women are involved in paid work during the early years of their children or only taking part-time employment during school hours. White (ibid.) further asserted that the mother's job to ensure the successful academic progress of their children demands the intense and long-term investment of the mother's time and energy.

Allison (1991) offered another insightful illustration of Japanese mothers' experiences, based on her anthropological study of discourse and practice around *obento* [Japanese lunch box for children (nursery children in this particular study)] in Tokyo. Japanese mothers whose children attend nurseries are required to prepare *obentos* everyday for their children, which contain perfectly cut miniature size bites with five or six varieties of animal or vegetable shaped nutritional food. As one can imagine without much difficulties, she suggested that preparation for *obentos* requires an immense amount of time and energy for mothers. According to Allison (1991), *obento* does not merely represent a lunch box but a deeply gendered ideology, which operates as a measure of 'good' mothering in Japan. Moreover, this labour intensive practice extends to other aspects of the mothering role in Japan. Thus, mothers in Japan are expected to offer continuous devotion to the education of their children by overseeing and managing the day-to-day educational practices of their children. In this construction fathers are completely absent as their primary responsibility is seen as the financial provider for the family. As a consequence, mothers are regarded as

directly responsible for either the academic success or failure of their children. These kinds of intense demands placed on mothers often prevent them from participating in the labour market, even part-time or temporary work in Japan (Allison 1991). Moreover, the expectations to conform to the duty of ‘good’ mothering in Japan are reinforced by the watchful eyes of the teacher as well as by other mothers. Allison (ibid.: 205) concluded that motherhood in Japan is ‘state ideology, working through children at home and at school and through such mother-imprinted labour that a child carries from home to school as with the *obento*.’

Consonant with the above, Hirao (2001) claimed that despite recent efforts made by the Japanese government to encourage men’s participation in childcare and domestic work, the gender norms and ideologies remain strong for Japanese women and men. Hirao pointed out that there is a clear separation between men’s and women’s spheres in Japan, with the former busy outside the home with long working hours, having little spare time to engage in childcare, and the latter confined to the domestic arena. Founded upon her study of the impact of educational demands on the construction of motherhood ideology in Japan, Hirao (2001) suggested that one major factor affecting this trend is the immense level of demands put on women to provide excellent education for their children, the phenomenon known as the *kyoiku mama* (education mother). Similar to the other East Asian countries where educational fervour is a widely spread phenomenon, 82 per cent of children in Japan were reported to attend after-school private educational institutions, take correspondence courses, tutoring services and various private lessons in the 1994 survey (Hirao 2001). According to Hirao, since *kyoiku mama* requires a tremendous amount of time and human capital, they tend to be well educated middle-class women who stay at home full-time, devoting the major part of their day to their children. As Allison (1996) suggested, the educational involvement of Japanese mothers begins at a very young age of the children. In an environment with fierce competition, it is the mother who is expected to take responsibility for closely engaging in this process and ensuring the academic success of their children.

One of the other dominant beliefs in Japanese society that has been identified is the view that a mother and a child are inseparable, sharing a special psychological bond. Hirao (2001) pointed out that although the significance of the mother for children is commonly

found among much Western literature, the concept of dependence, or *amae*, distinguishes the special relationship between a mother and a child in Japan from Western countries like the USA where independence and autonomy are highly valued. She stated that in Japan mothers are believed to consider their child as an extension of themselves, rather than as an independent individual. Whereas the developmental stage of a child is commonly regarded as learning to be independent from mothers in Western contexts, in Japan the mother-child interaction is considered to strengthen the mutual dependence between them. Since mother and child are seen as an inseparable pair, the childhood outcomes are also viewed as the consequence of how much the mother has invested in bringing up her child (Hirao 2001). Furthermore, Hirao (ibid.) argued that the introduction of the Western maternal deprivation and attachment theory proposed by Bowlby (1969) and Klaus and Kennell (1976) in the late 1970s quickly reinforced scientific support for the belief in the harmful effect of the mother's employment on her children's behavioural and mental development. This kind of portrayal continues to dominate contemporary Japanese parenting books, which emphasise the relationship between mothering style and child outcomes. According to Hirao (2001: 195), the two main messages of the majority of parenting books in Japan are: 'what a child learns by the age of three will remain until he reaches the age of one hundred' and 'mothers should stay at home at least until the child reaches three years of age'. Hirao maintained that the ideology of 'good' mothering had exerted a strong normative force on Japanese women although many from the younger generation of mothers in her study did not necessarily support the idea of the stay-home education mother.

2.2.3 Experiences of Chinese Mothers

2.2.3.1 Mothers' Experiences in Mainland Urban China

The work of Yuen-Tsang (1997) on the social support networks of Chinese working mothers in China offers a great insight into the lived experiences of Chinese women, focusing on the cultural facets of social support. She proposed the salience of close-knit support within families, especially for working mothers in China who largely rely on the assistance of their parents or parents-in-law in terms of childcare issues. Yuen-Tsang (1997) pointed out the 'communal' characteristics of Chinese social networks, which show

a stark difference from individual-orientated networks commonly found in Western literature. This in a sense reflects the Confucian familial ideals, which prioritise communal values over individual ones whilst endorsing the fulfilment of duty by every member of the family as a way of achieving the overall harmony of the family as well as society (Inoguchi and Shin 2009). Whilst familial childcare support has also been prevalently identified among women from other East Asian countries, such as Korea and Japan, Yuen-Tsang's findings seem to suggest that it is more strongly maintained and practised in China than other East Asian countries.

Meanwhile, analogous with their East Asian counterparts, her data also showed a consistently significant and powerful influence of the Confucian traditions in the lives of Chinese mothers. As noted previously, Confucian ideals support strongly gender segregated roles between men and women; thus even if women are involved in paid work outside the home, they are still considered as having the primary responsibility for looking after their children as well as household labour (Cho 2008). Whilst an intensive mothering ideology seemed to be less dominant in China than South Korea and Japan as mothers' participation in the labour market was strongly encouraged, it is noteworthy that Chinese mothers in her study continued to play a primary role in childcare and their education. Thus, accounts of the respondents suggested their espousal of the firmly gendered beliefs, in which their husbands were expected to take the lead role as a head of the household whilst they related themselves to rather supportive and dependent roles. In this construction, women continued to be regarded as a main care provider, irrespective of their employment status. Yuen-Tsang (1997) suggested that despite recent development in women's position in society and the Chinese government's efforts to eliminate the patriarchal relations in China based on the Communist ideology, the process had been extremely slow and the Confucian patriarchal norms and values remained strong, directly shaping the daily experiences of women in China. Thus, even when husbands participated in domestic work in her study, she stated that it was because of practical reasons rather than the ideological convictions of gender equality.

A similar observation was also made by Rofel (1999), who investigated the experiences of three generations of women workers in post-Mao China. According to Rofel, women in China remain subordinated by the communist state; far from being liberated, women in

China are oppressed by new modes of socialistic patriarchal family and work, doubly burdened by them. Also, based on gendered interpretations of capabilities, men and women are thought to be continuously subject to gender segregated labour in the workplace and at home (see also Ebrey 2006). Rofel (1999: 242) also argued that the Chinese state normalises women 'as part of the post-Mao project of modern subject formation', actively engaging itself in naturalising femininity and masculinity. In line with this, Liu (2008) claimed that the high involvement of women in the economic activity of China was often misunderstood as Chinese women enjoying gender equality. According to Liu, in reality female workers in China have to shoulder a double burden as a consequence of the lack of revolution in the domestic arena during the Maoist era and this unequal position of women continues to shape the landscape of Chinese female workers' lives even today.

2.2.3.2 Mothers' Experiences in Hong Kong

The experiences of women with children in Hong Kong have also been said to be similar to the experiences of other Chinese and East Asian mothers. For instance, based on their examination of mothers of children with mental health or behavioural issues in Hong Kong, Pun et al. (2004) pointed out the undue social and cultural expectations placed upon mothers in Hong Kong in nurturing and cultivating children as 'successful' individuals. In the effort to achieve the maximum result in the emotional, physical and intellectual development of a child, mothers in their study were expected to plan carefully and invest a substantial amount of their resources in child rearing. Pun et al. (2004) argued that whilst raising a 'perfect child' might be displayed as the project of both parents, it is the mother who is in reality expected to materialise this ideal by directly engaging in childcare and education, not the father. Supporting this, the research data of Lau et al. (2006) indicated that the economic activity of women in Hong Kong decreases upon childbirth and further diminishes when they reach school age.

A similar sentiment is reverberated in Chan's article (2008), which explored motherhood ideals and practices in Hong Kong via the virtual space of the Internet. Chan suggested that women in Hong Kong continue to play a principal role in caring for their children, whether they are employed or not. Whilst she argued that it is common among middle-class dual-earner families to hire nannies or domestic maids or to deploy other familial support to

assist housework, the mother's role as a primary care provider remains firm (Chan 2008). Moreover, her findings were indicative of the significance of children's education in Hong Kong where mothers are considered as the principal supervisor and manager who have to ensure the academic success of their children. Thus, the women in her research were seen to constantly express their joys and anxieties about their children's academic achievement in their social website network. In harmony with this, the study of Pearson and Rao (2003), which investigated relations between parents' socialisation goals and child rearing practices of English and Hong Kong mothers and children, also affirmed the emphasis placed on the educational achievement of children among Hong Kong mothers, compared to their English counterparts. In addition, their research also identified that Hong Kong participants stressed the importance of filial piety (Pearson and Rao 2003), which is one of the principal credos of Confucian traditions (Keum 2003).

2.2.4 Lacunas in the Literature of East Asian Contexts

Existing literature on the lives of East Asian mothers suggests that the Confucian tradition has a profound impact on women's experiences in East Asia. Whilst the literature indicates that the discourse of an intensive mothering ideology appears to have a stronger hold in South Korea and Japan than most Chinese societies (Brinton et al. 2001), direct comparisons of the work of Kim (2005), Hirao (2001), Yuen-Tsang (1997) and Chan (2008) seems to suggest that in all East Asian countries intensive child rearing is predominant and mothers are expected to take the major brunt of the responsibility, irrespective of their employment status. In particular, the mother's intensive involvement in their children's education commonly emerged as vital in the majority of existing studies in East Asia.

In the meantime, the above studies offer fascinating insights into the lived experiences of mothers in East Asian countries. In particular, they make a vital contribution to the understanding of how the deeply embedded patriarchal ideal affects their daily lives. Also, the literature enables us to start to indicate differences between the experiences of East Asian mothers from their Western counterparts, alongside the similarities that they share. In addition, by examining the heterogeneous experiences of women from different classes

and generations, the above studies also call attention to how women's experiences can differ, depending upon their socio-economic situations as well as dominant cultures where they are located. Furthermore, the findings appear to be highly significant in understanding the discourses of East Asian mothers living outside East Asian countries, such as England, by offering a yardstick to compare with. However, as stated earlier, there is a limited amount of literature on the experiences of East Asian mothers living outside East Asia, particularly in Britain, and how their migration into another country has affected their understanding of motherhood and employment, alongside gender relations.

2.3 Gender, Housework and Childcare

This section presents findings from existing literature on the gendered division of housework and childcare, starting with the examination of studies in Western countries, followed by the discussion of literature based in East Asian contexts. Schwalb et al. (2004) indicated that men's contribution to housework and childcare can play a salient part in the development of children; and a reading of Hochschild (1989) suggested that this is the case for women's lives as well, especially for those who are in paid employment. Over the last decades, according to Riggs (2005), there have been significant changes in the 'roles' carried out by men and women in the family with an increase in the number of women with children entering the labour market. However, notwithstanding such a shift, Mannino and Deutsch (2007) traced a long history of gender based social roles that have lingering effects, still creating different role divisions and expectations between men and women in the family. These deeply gender-ridden beliefs are thought to pervade society, making women perform the majority of the domestic labour, whether it is the mother herself or other female workers. Pascall and Sung (2007) proposed that particularly, in East Asian cultures where the patriarchal tradition is firmly established, highly gender segregated roles are more likely to shape the experiences of East Asian women and men. On the basis of this, in this section two main themes in the existing literature are discussed, as stated above. These are: the gendered division of household labour in Western contexts and the gendered division of family work in East Asian contexts.

2.3.1 Gendered Division of Household Labour in Western Contexts

Numerous authors have documented what they see as the continuing gendered division of domestic labour (e.g. Baxter 2000; Bridges et al. 2002; Gregory and Milner 2008; Arrighi and Maume, Jr. 2009; van Hoof 2011). The literature indicates that in most couples women spend much more time on household tasks, including childcare, than their male partners (Hochschild 1989; Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane 1992; Coltrane 2000; Baker 2010). Even in those circumstances in which both partners are employed full-time, research suggests that women do the majority of house chores and the primary childcare duties continue to fall on the women's shoulders (Hochschild 1989; Leonard 2001; Mannino and Deutsch 2007; Kitterod and Pettersen 2009), including those who have highly demanding professional careers (Vincent et al. 2004; van Hoof 2011). Hochschild (1989) explored how domestic work, including childcare, was shared among American working parents. According to the findings, women bore the brunt of childcare and domestic responsibilities in spite of the fact that all of the women in the study had full-time jobs. Consonant with this, Biernat and Wortman (1991), drawing from their study of a sample of married couples with young children and professional careers in the USA, claimed that equal status outside the home did not translate into equal sharing of household labour, with professionally employed women still maintaining traditional gender roles in the house. This continuation of gender biased norms and practices was also found in the study of Warde and Hetherington (1993), who analysed survey data on divisions of labour in households in Greater Manchester, UK in 1990. Warde and Hetherington concluded that the clearly gender divided domestic work patterns remained strong between married couples: whilst women continued to take major responsibilities for childcare and routine housework, such as washing-up and cooking meals, men tended to be involved in relatively non-routine tasks such as home maintenance and improvement (e.g. house renovation). Similarly, Vincent et al. (2004), in their study of professional dual earners with children in the UK, reported the persisting effect of the traditional understanding of gendered roles in the family. According to the results of the research, notwithstanding the high educational level and the socio-economic advantages experienced by the participants, they continued to carry out pre-assigned gender roles. In the majority of cases, if women did not provide primary care, it was still women who

organised and managed childcare arrangements, doing all the research and making choices.

Kan (2008), carrying out an analysis of data from the British Household Panel Survey between 1993 and 2003, suggested that the inequality in the division of household labour may be decreasing with rises in women's labour market earnings relative to their male partners. Nevertheless, this study asserted that women still have responsibility for the major share of housework. In a similar vein, Kitterod and Pettersen (2009), drawing from their analysis of the latest Norwegian time-use survey, concluded that full-time employment for the mother did not positively correlate with the father's contribution in any types of household labour. In line with this, Gregory and Milner (2008), in their examination of fatherhood regimes and father involvement in housework and childcare in the UK and France, suggested that, although men's contribution to domestic work and childcare appeared to be increasing in both countries, such a change was slow and did not correspond with patterns of female participation in economic activities. A similar pattern was identified in the work of van Hoof (2011), which examined the division of housework among well-educated middle-class heterosexual couples living in the UK. According to her data, whilst most couples were aware of gender equality, citing their differential participation in housework in terms of other reasons than gendered notions, the actual experiences were firmly tied to the gender division between men and women, with the latter doing the majority of housework even if they worked full-time. On the basis of this, van Hoof (2011) concluded that the segregation of domestic work between the two genders remained unchallenged. This persistent gendered division of labour at home is also identified in a recent report. Kan (2012), based on her analysis of the UK household panel survey called *Understanding Society*, reported that women on average carry out three times more housework than men among married couples. Also, whilst the time both men and women spend doing domestic work increases according to the number of dependent children they have, women are significantly more affected by this than men (Kan 2012). Moreover, her findings suggested that men who have a much higher income than their wives do not participate much in domestic labour; by contrast, wives with a much higher income than their spouses appear to do more housework, suggesting their involvement in 'doing gender'. Drawing on these, Kan (2012) concluded that gender ideology continues to affect the division of household labour between men and women by hindering improvement in gender equality.

Existing studies of cross-national data have also indicated the continuing gender disparity in the household labour although some positive signs of changes have been noted. For example, cross-national data of six developed countries analysed by Sullivan and Gershuny (2001) suggested that the time women spent doing unpaid domestic labour, excluding childcare, decreased substantially whereas men's involvement in this increased consistently from the 1960s to the 1990s. Similarly, Sayer (2010), based on her analysis of cross-national time-use surveys of nine developed countries between the mid 1960s and the early 2000s, noted a decline in women's time consumed for domestic work in all countries and an increase in men's time for housework. However, simultaneously she suggested that in many countries, including the UK, there was neither a decline in women partaking in household labour nor an increase in men that was considerable since the mid 1980s.

In addition, Geist (2010) examined men's and women's reports on domestic labour time and the division of housework in 35 countries, and found that women spend more time doing housework than men in all countries. Consonant with this, Crompton's and Lyonette's (2007) investigation of five European countries indicated that women tended to perform most of the routine domestic chores, such as cleaning and laundry, in all five countries even if they were employed. According to their analysis, women with professional and managerial jobs were most likely to experience the less traditional division of domestic labour. However, Crompton and Lyonette (*ibid.*) claimed that this still did not mean the equal share of housework between the two genders because over 40 percent of women with professional and managerial occupations, even in those countries where this group of women reported the greatest help from their male partners, continued to take the principal responsibility for household chores. Den Dulk and van Doorne-Huiskes (2007) also made a similar point based on their examination of Eurostat data collected in ten European countries between 1998 and 2002. According to den Dulk and van Doorne-Huiskes (*ibid.*), women carried out on average 60 to 66 percent of all household labour, including childcare. In addition, their analysis indicated that having young children escalated the gender segregation of domestic work as it significantly decreased mothers' participation in paid work and a subsequent intensification of their involvement in household work; whilst having young children did not have a notable impact on men's employment. In similar fashion, Van der Lippe et al. (2011), drawing from

their investigation of the Multinational Time Use Archive of 17 countries between 1965 and 1998, suggested the continuing inequalities in the division of household labour between men and women; although their analysis indicated that having young children also reduced men's involvement in paid work as well as women's. According to Van der Lippe et al. (2011), whilst there was variation in the degree of gender disparity in terms of paid and unpaid work between countries, depending on various institutional and individual factors, the unequal patterns of gender division within the household were commonly identified across the countries.

2.3.1.1 Unequal Expectations for Men and Women

Consistent with the above, the findings of Riggs's (1997, 1998, 2005) studies in the USA were highly illustrative of the persistent existence of unequal expectations for mothers and fathers in their caring roles, with the results suggesting a continuing double standard with regard to views of working mothers and fathers. In her three experimental studies of the perceptions of mothers and fathers, Riggs contended that there continues to be a clear gendered expectation that fathers provide for their family economically and mothers play a role as primary carers. These findings resonated with the USA study of Deutsch and Saxon (1998), in which they examined praise and criticism reported by parents in order to investigate the double standard of parenting for men and women. According to the analysis of the results, the participants who were cohabiting or married couples with children criticised women more than men for little involvement with the family or too much participation in paid employment; on the other hand, men reported being criticised more than women, for too much involvement in their homes or too little in paid work; men who shared domestic responsibilities equally reported to have received more praise than women for engagement in childcare, whereas women reported to have been more praised than men for successfully combining family and employment. Reminiscent of these results, Easton's report (2009) 'Selfish Adults Damage Childhood', published in Britain, blamed working mothers for contributing to the damage done to children. This clearly indicates that the report is founded upon a belief that women have a primary responsibility for caring for their children. Despite differences among women, depending on their class, ethnicity, and educational qualifications, Leonard (2001) argued that women share a common oppression. Vincent et al. (2004) stated that raising children remains, for the large majority, the

women's task, whether it is mothers or other women carers (see also Lewis and Giullari 2005).

2.3.2 The Gendered Division of Family Work in East Asian Contexts

Some studies have proposed that the patterns of the division of household labour differ, contingent upon ethnicity (Coltrane 2000; Leonard 2001). As discussed in the previous section, research indicates that East Asian countries have been influenced by Confucianism, which supports strong patriarchal ideals (Pearson and Rao 2003). Yi and Nauck (2006) argued that under the Confucian influence, all East Asian cultures traditionally share the stereotypical image of the father and the mother, which, according to Ho (1987: 230), is exemplified by the motto "strict father, kind mother". As indicated in existing literature, gender ideology and gendered norms are thought to persist in all of East Asian countries. However, Schwalb et al. (2004, 2010) proposed that despite such commonalities those countries are considered to share, heterogeneous patterns of fathering have developed in Korea, Japan and Chinese communities due to dissimilar historical development.

2.3.2.1 Gender Divided Household Labour in the Korean Setting

Data analysis suggests that Korea has undergone cycles of social upheaval and more Korean women have gained access to higher education. The statistical data of Korean Statistical Yearbook of Education (2010) indicated that the percentages of Korean females who entered higher education increased considerably since 1990: for instance, 32.4 per cent of females entered higher education in 1990, compared to 65.4 per cent in 2000, 80.8 per cent in 2005 and 83.5 per cent in 2008. Also, Schwalb et al. (2010) pointed out some changes in men's participation in and attitudes towards childcare, especially among the younger generation. Yet other authors have asserted that traditional Confucian values have persisted in Korea, having had a strong influence on Korean fathers' attitudes (Ryu 1994; Sung 2003; Won and Pascall 2004; Pascall and Sung 2007). As a result, Gelb and Palley (1994) argued that the majority of Korean fathers have a principal responsibility as breadwinners while mothers take primary responsibility for looking after the household.

However, with increases in Korean maternal employment, expectations for paternal involvement with children and domestic tasks are said to have risen (Schwalb et al. 2010). Reflecting this trend, there is some evidence which suggests that the younger generation of fathers who are in their 30s endeavour to become more involved with their children (Lee and Han 1998). Han (1997) claimed that younger Korean fathers invest more in caring for their children, such as feeding, bathing and diapering, than did their own fathers. In relation to this, several studies have suggested that more highly educated fathers tend to contribute more to domestic labour, and those working in professional fields and with greater incomes are reported to be more actively involved with their children (Park 1996; Lee and Han 1998; Yoon and Chung 1999). However, despite these signs of changes in men's attitudes, studies assessing the impact of maternal employment on paternal involvement in childcare and domestic work in Korea are not consistently positive (Ishii-Kuntz 2004). For instance, Schwalb et al. (2004) noted that research on the relationship between maternal employment and paternal behaviour had produced contradictory results: one study showed an increased contribution of fathers to childcare when mothers were employed (Yoon and Chung 1999) whilst two other studies were indicative of no changes in the involvement of fathers or even less participation (Ko and Ok 1994; Jeung and Park 1996). The latter resonates with the findings of Sung (2003), Won and Pascall (2004) and Kim (2005), which have demonstrated the persistent impact of gender divided practices in Korea. According to these studies, women took the majority share of childcare and housework responsibilities without much support or involvement from their husbands, on top of their commitment to paid work. Kim (2005) suggested that there was little evidence that showed any significant changes in the attitudes of husbands towards childcare and housework. Working mothers, especially middle-class women, often relied on their own mothers or mothers-in-law for childcare, and husbands in her study participated in the household labour only when other women were not available.

2.3.2.2 Gender Divided Household Labour in Japan

Like other East Asian countries, Japanese fathers are thought to have authority as the head of the traditional family system. However, Schwalb et al. (2004) suggested that the paternal role underwent a dramatic change during the 1945-1952 American occupation of Japan, which ostensibly promoted democracy, equality and individualism, creating a shift

for some Japanese fathers from authoritarian to permissive fathering. Similar to Korea, although the involvement of Japanese fathers with childcare is said to be limited, there are a few signs in existing research that the younger generation of Japanese fathers is more involved with their family lives than their own fathers' generation (Ishii-Kuntz et al. 2004; Schwalb et al. 2010). Consistent with this, Sorifu (2000), drawing from a comparison of 1987 and 2000 survey data, suggested that the percentage of men and women who supported the gendered division of labour within the family declined with the rise in employment of Japanese mothers. Also, Kang and Sagara (1998) suggested that Japanese fathers with high educational attainment tended to participate more in child rearing. All the same, Makino et al. (1995), based on their cross-cultural studies, pointed out that Japanese fathers still spent less time with their children than fathers in the USA and Sweden. For example, in terms of the amount of time the fathers spent together with their children, mainly through their presence but also inclusive of interactions such as play and helping with schoolwork, fathers in the USA and Sweden are said to spend between four and five hours a day on weekdays, compared to fathers in Japan who spend between three and four hours daily at these times. In addition, for questions regarding balancing childcare and paid work, 29 per cent of Japanese fathers gave high priority over their paid work in comparison with approximately five per cent of fathers in the USA and only around one per cent of Swedish fathers (Makino et al. 1995).

2.3.2.3 Gender Divided Household Labour in Chinese Societies

2.3.2.3.1 Gendered Division of Household Labour in China

Chinese cultures are established on Confucian values (Ebrey et al. 2006) and the images of the stern father and nurturant mother have been unifying cultural concepts for diverse Chinese communities for centuries (Ho 1994). Nonetheless, fathers in China are usually regarded to contribute more to domestic tasks as a result of the Communist ideology of gender equality that has affected Chinese society (Schwalb et al. 2004). In line with this trend, mothers in China are also actively involved in paid employment (Yuen-Tsang 1997). However, these findings should be read with a caveat, given that the examination of many existing studies continues to indicate the perpetuation of gender segregated norms and practices in China (e.g. Yuen-Tsang 1997; Rofel 1999; Zuo and Bian 2001; Liu 2008). As

noted previously, Yuen-Tsang (1997) suggested that women in China continue to be regarded as having the primary responsibility for domestic labour, irrespective of their employment status. This perception also strengthens the limited involvement of their husbands in household work as many Chinese women believe housework is mainly their responsibility even if they also participate in paid work (Zuo and Bian 2001). Founded on the investigation of the gendered division of housework among middle-class couples living in Beijing, Zuo and Bian (2001) suggested that, notwithstanding the Chinese government's effort to promote gender equality since the 1949 Communist revolution, clearly gender biased values and practices remain strong in China, with women maintaining the brunt of domestic and childcare responsibilities even if they are employed full-time.

2.3.2.3.2 Gendered Division of Household Labour in Hong Kong

The literature suggests that the pattern of gender segregated household labour in Hong Kong also displays a lot of similarities to the other Chinese communities. According to Lee (2002), married women's involvement in economic activities has become more common than before as a result of industrialisation and economic development of Hong Kong. Also, Chan (2006) argued that the relatively popular employment of domestic workers in middle-class families has encouraged the labour market participation of women with dependent children in Hong Kong society. However, both authors went on to say that such increase in women's labour market activity outside the home does not seem to have freed women from their gendered ideology and responsibilities (Lee 2002; Chan, 2006, 2008). Drawing on his study of domestic division of labour in middle-class Chinese families in Hong Kong, Lee (2002) claimed that despite their full-time paid work, middle-class women in Hong Kong in his study continued to take major responsibilities for domestic labour and childcare. According to Lee, even when men were involved in household work, it tended to be confined to non-routine activities, such as the maintaining and repairing of domestic appliances; similarly, when they engaged in childcare, it was more likely to be recreational aspects. Moreover, the use of paid domestic workers did not decrease gender inequality within the home sphere (Lee 2002). Instead, this is thought to have created opportunities for men to withdraw from household and childcare duties, leaving women to take full responsibilities for assigning and supervising housework to their paid helpers, as well as devoting more time to the extra educational activities of their children (Lee 2002; Chan

2008).

2.4 The Experiences of East Asian Migrant Women

Existing literature on East Asian migrant women's lives highlights new challenges and possibilities they encounter as a result of their exposure to a different culture or to diverse cultures as well as possible shifts in their identity and social position (e.g. Lim 1997; Lee 2005). In this regard, the implications of migration for married or partnered women with children are likely to vary, depending on their migration trajectory, the economic circumstances of the family, the availability of support networks as well as the kind of gender ideology couples hold (Lee et al. 2002). Whilst migration might provide some women with opportunities to question and challenge the traditional gendered relations at home through their financial contribution to the family (e.g. Lim 1997); for others it might mean the reinforcement of gendered roles as wives and mothers as part of the family strategy to secure a successful settlement in a new setting (e.g. Ho 2006; Cooke 2007). Also, a number of individual and social factors interplay in shaping mothering beliefs and practices of migrant women, such as the individual circumstances of migration, women's understanding of what constitutes 'good' mothering, and the availability of social support in the host society (Tsai et al. 2011).

Lim (1997), based on her investigation of Korean migrant couples in the USA, shed light on changes and continuities in gender dynamics between married couples in a diasporic space. In her study women who used to be housewives in Korea were often obliged to participate in family business or paid work as a strategic move to survive or establish financially in a new country. This change in their gender role enabled some women to question the traditional gender norm and demand shifts in their husbands' attitudes towards domestic work. However, Lim (ibid.) pointed out that the traditional gender ideology of Korea continued to shape the experiences of Korean migrant women with the majority of both men and women still upholding the idea that men are the head of the household and domestic labour is principally women's responsibility, regardless of their involvement in employment. Thus, the degree to which women challenged the male dominance at home was found to be limited in this study. Lim (1997) additionally noted that despite some changes in men's attitudes towards housework, many Korean husbands were reluctant to

be involved in domestic labour, especially routine indoor work, such as laundry and cooking, which they perceived as female tasks. As a result, women mostly used the “politics of appeal” for help rather than direct demands as men tended to respond to the former better than the latter (Lim 1997: 41) or resigned themselves to the unequal division of family work in order to avoid marital conflicts.

The research of Lee (2005) on the experiences of Korean migrant women’s employment in Australia also underscored the effect of migration on gender relations. Her research suggested that whilst there seemed to be a general gendered culture identifiable in Korean migrant women’s stories, it was divergently interpreted and understood by individual women mediated by their personality, class and family circumstances. As a result, some women maintained firmly traditional gender norms and a gendered division of labour even after migration. However, this was not possible for other women in the study, as they were forced to participate in the labour market in order to support their family financially, similar to some women in Lim (1997)’s research. On the other hand, for some minority Korean women migration to Australia offered them opportunities to redefine their identity and life through their active participation in paid employment. Yet, this was often accompanied by resentment from their conservative husbands who regarded changes in gender roles and their wives’ financial independence as a threat to their male authority as a head of the family. However, despite variation, gender disparity seemed to have affected all the participants in her study. Even if women were highly educated and skilled, their employment experiences were often hindered by childcare or family needs, unlike their husbands whose engagement in paid employment was not significantly affected by domestic needs. In addition, Lee (2005) pointed out that women’s continuing participation in the labour market in Australia was only possible when they solved childcare and domestic work issues by using their own resources. Furthermore, employed women in her study often had to juggle the double demands of paid work and domestic labour with no help from their husbands.

Analogous with these studies, existing literature on Chinese migrant women is also largely indicative of their highly gendered lives albeit there seems to be variation between individual women, influenced by various individual and social factors. For instance, Lee et al. (2002), based on their examination of Chinese women in Britain, suggested

considerable differences between those who migrated as dependents of husbands and those who migrated on their own in order to improve their employment opportunities or seek independent lifestyles. Many women in their study who migrated individually demonstrated their determination and abilities to carry on with more independent and self-fulfilling lifestyles than women who migrated as dependants of their husbands. In addition, these women did not accept the gendered practices at home, requesting regular participation of their husbands in domestic work and childcare. In comparison, gendered norms and practices had a significant impact on those who migrated as dependents of their husbands who came to Britain to pursue career advancement via postgraduate level education. According to Lee et al. (ibid.: 613), family activities and living arrangements were often determined by the needs of husbands – i.e. achieving the best academic result within the shortest period of time; in this context women largely bore the brunt of ‘anxieties, social isolation, responsibilities and sacrifices’ as part of the familial strategy to succeed.

This kind of gendering experience of migration was also found in the existing studies of middle- and professional-class Chinese migrant women in Australia and Britain. Ho (2006), who investigated Chinese migrant women’s experiences of employment and childcare in Australia, argued that there was a ‘feminisation’ of roles for middle-class Chinese migrant women who migrated alongside their career aspiring husbands. Drawing on her study of women from Hong Kong and China in Australia, Ho argued that the experience of migration differed between the two genders; in the process of re-arranging paid employment and childcare women tended to take up caring responsibilities in the home, giving up their career opportunities as part of the family strategy to successfully settle down in the host country. This, according to Ho (2006), resulted in the Chinese men retaining their employment status as a main breadwinner, whilst the Chinese women took sole responsibility for domestic workloads, especially as a consequence of losing the familial support from grandparents or paid domestic workers on top of their role transition to housewives in Australia. This also meant the intensification of their mothering work, which often used to be shared with grandmothers or nannies in their country of origin. Subsequently, these women were engaged in the reframing of their gender identity from a career woman to a housewife and a mother.

Consonant with this, Cooke (2007) also highlighted the continuing influence of gendered relations among migrant Chinese families, drawing on her investigation of the employment experiences of migrant Chinese academic couples in Britain. Cooke maintained that the patriarchal gender norm seemed to play a most influential role in affecting Chinese women's diasporic lives. Despite the similar career prospects and academic qualifications those couples shared, the women were the ones who compromised their employment in order to meet the career needs of their husbands or family needs, such as childcare. For these women priorities were given to the wellbeing of their children and the collective achievement of the family, which often meant the career success of their husbands. Cooke (2007) argued that in the trajectory of migration women are the ones who tend to forgo their individual ambition and desire, taking the burden of ensuring the successful settlement of the family.

As examined so far, the current literature indicates that migration has varied ramifications for women, depending on a range of intersecting factors. Whilst findings suggest it provides a channel for some women to experience new ways of life and redefine their roles and identity, they also indicate that migration might intensify the gendering of paid and unpaid work, especially for married women with young children.

2.5 Conclusion

A review of existing literature has demonstrated that the 'good' mothering ideology and gendered discourse is still depicted as playing an influential part in shaping women's as well as men's experiences in both Western and Eastern societies. Within this highly gender segregated ideology, authors have suggested that the majority of women carry on bearing the brunt of major caring responsibilities, regardless of their work status. The investigation of existing studies of East Asian countries is invaluable in understanding East Asian cultural contexts and how these cultures differ from those of Western countries, such as the UK and the USA. Similarly, literature on East Asian migrant women provides contextual information about East Asian females living in transnational settings and helps with fathoming their lives better. Whilst there is a plethora of literature on women's motherhood, employment and gender relations within the family as well as a few studies of migrant

women in Western countries, there are a limited number of studies regarding the experiences of East Asian mothers living in England as stated previously. Therefore it is important to elucidate this, by investigating if and how the migration of East Asian women has affected their experiences of the gendered division of housework and their narratives of motherhood and employment in the transnational⁴ milieu. Having examined existing debates about motherhood and gender, the next chapter presents the theoretical framework for this study.

⁴ The term 'transnational' in this thesis is used to mean crossing from one country to another, similar to the word 'diasporic' (see also Bryceson and Vuorela 2002).

Chapter 3. Complex Configurations of Motherhood Identity of East Asian Women in England

Chapter 2 presented existing academic debates on motherhood and gendered housework, based on both Western and Eastern societies. This chapter examines different approaches to theorising identity for the purpose of formulating an analytical framework that opens up a potentially more effective way of understanding motherhood identity with particular reference to mothers of East Asian origin.

The first section presents three main methods of understanding motherhood identity: ideology and its discursive impact on women's identity; narrative stories; and 'othering'. These theoretical approaches are discussed because they are regarded as offering useful ways of examining motherhood identity. However, the complex characteristics of migrant mothers' identity may also require other components that could be significant in fathoming highly gendered motherhood identity, interwoven with other social relations and organisations. Based on this, the second section discusses a number of key concepts: Walby's patriarchy, and Connell's masculinities and femininities; nation, *ethnie* and culture; followed by an investigation of the notion of intersectionality. Finally, I finish the chapter by providing a configurational theoretical framework drawing from all these.

3.1 Ways of Understanding Identity

3.1.1 Ideology and Its Potential Impact on Motherhood Identity

3.1.1.1 Ideology

Ideology refers to the conceptual framework by which individuals make sense of the world surrounding them (Glenn 1994). Ideologies are thought to function as lenses which shape and influence our everyday experience in a particular way. Hattery (2001) suggested that

ideology produces certain behavioural expectations, which construct the subjective experience of individuals. In a similar vein, Therborn (1980: 3) proposed that ideology qualifies individuals as subjects; that is, the operation of ideology entails ‘the constitution and patterning of how human beings live their lives as conscious, reflecting initiators of acts in a structured, meaningful world.’ He therefore suggested that individuals learn and become aware of what exists and what does not; what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’, and what is possible or impossible through ideologies. By means of *affirmations* and *sanctions*, he argued, ideologies become effective: the conformity to the orders of ideological discourse will generate the expected outcome by ideology; whilst the contravention of the orders of ideological discourse will be sanctioned (Therborn 1980: 34). According to Freeden (2003), the ideological map does not offer an objective reality of the world by imposing one view over another as necessary and righteous. Similarly, Glenn (1994) suggested that a hegemonic ideology represents the position of a dominant group in a particular society, which seeks to justify and retain its supremacy over other ideologies by making the existing system inexorable. However, despite its seemingly inflexible characteristics, a dominant form of ideology in a particular historical era is not inherently fixed (Glenn *ibid.*). Therborn (1980) claimed that ideologies are not our possessions but ‘*ongoing social processes*’, which are kaleidoscopic. He went on to suggest that this is particularly apposite to today’s open and interconnected global societies, where divergent ideologies ‘not only coexist, compete, and clash, but also overlap, affect, and contaminate one another’ (Therborn 1980: 79).

3.1.1.2 Motherhood Ideology

Hays (1996) argued that motherhood ideology is a means through which women with children make sense of their mothering experience, including what kind of mother they are, whether they are ‘good’ mothers. Many existing studies have indicated that motherhood ideology is crucial in understanding women’s beliefs and practices of mothering, especially with regard to the issue of combining childcare with paid employment (Hays 1996; Garey 1999; Hattery 2001; Vincent et al. 2004). Although motherhood ideology may not be the only factor affecting mothers’ decisions towards their involvement in paid work, Hattery (2001) suggested that it often has a direct impact on the ways in which women with dependent children make decisions about their labour market participation as well as the

way they evaluate their own involvement in economic activities and childcare arrangements. Moreover, the power of motherhood ideology is thought to be illustrated in mothers' continued struggle with reconciling the competing demands of motherhood and paid work in spite of the dearth of supportive systems at the workplace or within the family (Segura 1994). In particular, Hays (1996) argued that the dominance of intensive mothering in developed Western societies, such as the USA and the UK, in a relatively recent historical era has put undue pressure on all mothers as well as having a considerable influence on their identity formation. Hays (*ibid.*: 8) described the ideology of intensive mothering as 'child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour-intensive, and financially expensive'. Within this ideology, according to Hays, child rearing requires mothering practices that involve provision for their children beyond the basic sustenance. She asserted that based on the idea of child innocence, contemporary child rearing ideology in the USA is dominated by child-centred discourse that prioritises the needs and desires of children. Within this discourse, she stated, the ultimate aim is 'the protection and preservation of the child's natural innocence, affection, purity and goodness', neither to raise an economically productive child who contributes to the family income nor a virtuous future citizen of a nation (Hays 1996: 46). According to Hays, all mothers in her study, whether they were employed or not, ultimately shared the recognition of the central credos of intensive mothering and felt pressure to live up to the expectations of the culturally dominant form of 'good' mothering. Thus, she argued that employed mothers are engaged in redefining their motherhood ideology in order to 'resolve' their feelings of ambivalence and inadequacy. This may include mothers asserting that: their economic activity is ultimately beneficial for their children; and a happy mother creates a happy child. In doing so Hays suggested that those women tried to make it evident that they placed their children's interests foremost. Hays (1996) continued to assert that her employed participants engaged in mothering practices that were just as child-centred, physically and mentally demanding, and financially expensive as their stay-home counterparts.

Consistent with the above, Garey (1999), drawing from her study of working mothers employed in a hospital in the USA, demonstrated the pervasive influence of an intensive mothering ideology on working mothers. Garey found that mothers in her study changed their employment patterns in order to adapt to intensive mothering: for instance, from full-time to part-time or taking night shift. Based on this, Garey (1999: 196) maintained that a

large proportion of mothers with paid work in her study did not look for ‘ways to mother less but ways that enabled them to be employed while continuing to do much of the work of mothering’. In a similar vein, Hattery (2001) contended that an intensive mothering ideology continues to hold hegemonic power in the USA due to its disproportionate representations in public discourse, such as the media (see also Douglas and Michaels 2004). Hence, all women in her study, including those who rejected the principles of an intensive mothering ideology, believed that childcare was the primary responsibility of mothers, agonizing over childcare arrangements. This persistent predominance of an intensive mothering ideology is also identifiable in the UK context. For example, the study of Haynes (2008) on the experience of motherhood and employment of accountant professionals in the UK, seems to confirm the hegemonic position of an intensive mothering ideology, which those women had to negotiate with their professional identity. Also, the findings of Vincent et al. (2004) suggested that many middle-class mothers living in London in their study, whether in paid work or not, practised a kind of “professional” motherhood. This included taking their children to an array of activities; carefully planning the future schooling of their children; and utilizing expert information cautiously. Thus, Vincent et al. (2004) claimed that all the mothers they interviewed could be described as “professional mothers”, practising intensive mothering. Moreover, consonant with the findings of Hattery (2001), the women in her study took primary responsibilities for childcare issues: carrying out research on childcare options, making the choice of childcare arrangement, and paying their salary for the care.

3.1.1.3 Heterogeneity and Malleability of Ideology

Hays (1996) suggested that although the ideology of intensive mothering in Western societies appears to be natural, it is the product of a particular historical and cultural context. Hence, according to Hays (*ibid.*), throughout history different ideals and practices of mothering have existed, along with divergent child rearing techniques. Hattery (2001) argued that since ideology is developed within a particular cultural milieu, it can be suggested that different ideologies of mothering exist in different cultural settings. Analogous with this, Segura (1994) affirmed that motherhood ideology as a social construct is a culturally developed framework whose meanings can vary and are prone to change. Founded on this, it is arguable that mothers in certain ‘race’, ethnicity, and class

groups may not necessarily adhere to an intensive mothering ideology. As Segura (1994) and Hill-Collins (1994) argued, because ethnic minority women have historically been subject to divergent culture and labour market experiences from the majority of white mothers, competing ideologies of motherhood are likely to have developed. For example, Hill-Collins (1994) claimed that women of colour had been influenced by different mothering ideologies from the Western white middle-class ideology of intensive mothering because of interconnected structures of 'race', class, and gender. Hill-Collins (ibid.) contended that the dichotomy between the public arena of employment and the private sphere of the family does not apply to women of colour; due to their subjection to the different historical development from white mothers, for women of colour mothering and paid work have been conceptualised as interlinked domains. In line with this, Segura (1994), drawing from her study of mothers of Mexican descent in the USA, pointed out the significance of the contextualised understanding of experiences of motherhood among women with dissimilar cultural backgrounds. According to her findings, Mexicanas, raised in an environment where economic and family work often intermingled, did not divide social life into public and private realms, but viewed economic activity as one workable aspect of motherhood. Similarly, the research of Duncan and Edwards (1999) on lone mothers in the UK suggested that mothers of African and Caribbean origin constructed their understanding of full-time employment as part of 'good' mothering (see also Duncan et al. 2003). On the basis of these, it seems highly plausible that mothers with East Asian heritage in England have been affected by different notions of motherhood as divergent cultural beliefs could have been available to them. Meanwhile, although Yi and Nauck (2006) suggested that all East Asian societies have historically been under the considerable influence of Confucian patriarchal relations, which demand women's devotion to caring for the family, Ebrey et al. (2006) argued that each country has simultaneously followed different political and economic paths. For example, the work of Ebrey et al. (ibid.) indicated that most East Asian countries have proactively accommodated the Western liberal democratic ideology whereas China has upheld Communism, although China has recently begun to embrace the capitalist ideology by opening the market. The work of Brinton et al. (2004) also suggested that dissimilar ideologies of mothering are likely to have developed among East Asian countries as the notions of motherhood for Chinese and other East Asians are embedded in different ideological constructs, offering the possibility for the construction of diverse concepts of motherhood identity.

3.1.1.4 Discourse

Freeden's (2003) work suggested that language is a primary vehicle for ideologies. Thus, ideologies are represented and developed within systems of discourse, such as books and different modes of media, which are available to most people within a culture or a subculture. Weedon (1987) argued that such ideologies emerged in discourse are influential for individuals to make sense of who they are, what and how they do things around them. Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson (2001) indicated that it is through discourse people attach meaning to their lives and experiences, maintaining one's place in society. Hence, Potter and Wetherell (1987) asserted that a subjective sense of self is produced in discourse. In particular, it has been suggested that the majority within a cultural group often adopts dominant ideologies (Hattery 2001) as a consequence of the disproportionate promotion of hegemonic ideologies in the popular discursive medium, such as the mass media (Douglas and Michaels 2004). According to Therborn (1980: 81), people apprehend ideology as 'operating through discursive practices' and a given ideological order retains its status through the production and reproduction of discursive *affirmations* and *sanctions*. For example, the popular image of motherhood, represented in various forms of discourse – the media, schoolbooks, and public policy – is thought to support the dominant status of intensive mothering in developed Western societies whilst making many employed mothers experience discomfort or feelings of inadequacy as a 'good' mother, deviating from the popular image of 'ideal' mother (Segura 1994).

It has thus been argued that it is through discourse that meaning is constructed and changed (Wetherell et al. 2001), and the internalisation of ideological convictions are expressed and reflected (Gergen 1985). The culturally dominant ideology emerged in discourse is said to demonstrate 'collective understandings and meaning systems' and its power to shape individuals' experiences as well as their identity (Johnston and Swanson 2006). In particular, gendered ideology has been seen as a powerful discursive base, which has a significant impact on women's daily lives, in connection with ethnicity and class (Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson 2001). In subsequent chapters I will draw on interview data to examine the potentially diverse discursive positions of mothers from East Asia, and demonstrate how gendered understanding appears to have shaped interviewee's division of

labour within the family, in conjunction with the ways in which dominant cultural ideologies have affected their construction and reconstruction of motherhood identity in England.

3.1.1.5 Discussion

Theorisation of ideology and discourse appears to provide a valuable way of investigating the experiences and the motherhood identity of East Asian women living in England, and how the collective understanding of a dominant ideology has trickled into individual level experiences. The examination of how identity is constituted based on existing discourses on motherhood is likely to help me to demonstrate the structural and discursive influence of motherhood ideologies on individual identity construction, as Johnston and Swanson (2006) suggested. However, despite its potential significance, my analysis of the data generated for my Master's (Lim 2008b) indicated that the analysis of discourse and ideological influence has limitations on investigating individual women's identity development in a holistic manner by fragmenting their life stories into discursive thematic chunks. In addition, the pilot research undertaken for my Master's (see Lim 2008b) suggested that I needed to do narrative analysis as well in order to understand in depth how people make sense of themselves. This was further reinforced when I analysed my data gathered for this study. As such, this theory alone seems to be inadequate to grasp the highly detailed multifaceted aspects involved in the motherhood identity formation of East Asian women living in England. Hence, from the analysis of the data generated for my Master's and this thesis I concluded that to obtain a better understanding of such complexities it is important to also study individual narrative accounts of life, which can be an excellent complement to the discursive approach. Drawing on this, I analysed the data discussed in chapters 6 and 7 using narrative analysis, alongside discourse analysis.

3.1.2 Narratives⁵: Stories of Human Life

⁵ Some scholars (e.g. Labov and Waletzky 1967; Riessman 1990, 1993) use the term 'narratives' distinctively from 'stories' as having a particular structural form. For instance, Riessman (1993: 18) pointed out that 'not all narratives in interviews are stories in the linguistic sense of the term'. In line with this, Labov and Waletzky (1967: 32-40) suggested that narratives have formal structures, comprised of five components, each of which plays a particular function: orientation (orient the

3.1.2.1 Storytelling and Construction of the Self

Lieblich et al. (1998: 7) stated that human beings are ‘storytellers by nature’, and other scholars added that individuals make sense of their lives and construct their identity through telling stories (Bruner 1987; Frank 2002). Gee (1985: 11) also contended that a principal way people make sense of their experience is by casting it into a narrative form. Ricoeur (1984) likewise asserted that individuals try to understand what happened to them by ‘grasping together’ their past events and incidents using a plot, transforming them into a meaningful story. Such literature has indicated that narrative constructs life and gives meaning to it; simultaneously stories individuals tell feed into their daily experiences, ‘for laying down routes into memory, for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present but redirecting it into the future’ (Bruner 1987: 31). By locating themselves within their narratives, Ginsburg (1989) suggested, people establish a sense of who they are. Gabriel et al. (2010) proposed that in the process of telling stories a person’s ‘voice’ and identity emerges from the divergent stories they tell. Thus, narratives are thought to be fundamental to the construction of the ‘emergent’ self (Eakin 1999). Identity constructed from narratives is also seen as the product of reflexivity (Mishler 1986; Riessman 1993; Miller 2005). While recounting their past experiences, tellers are said to reinterpret and redefine their actions and dilemmas, creating new meaning for their lives (Riessman 1993). In this sense, narrating one’s life may be a selective and interpretive accomplishment of an individual (Bruner 1987), and from this perspective identity is an ongoing project, which is constantly constructed and reconstructed. Maynes et al. (2008) drew on this to argue that the close examination of individual narratives enables us to understand how an individual’s sense of self has evolved over time. This point can be linked to the example of changes in women’s identity over time, illustrated in chapter 6, from single career-minded women to stay-home mothers who put their children’s needs and wants first.

listener in respect to person, place, time and situation), complicating action (a series of events), evaluation (the importance and meaning of the action), resolution (what eventually happened), and coda (returning the perspective to the present). On the other hand, others (e.g. Frank 2002; Maynes et al. 2008) employ them almost synonymously. In their approaches both ‘narratives’ and ‘stories’ refer to individuals’ accounts of social phenomena and events. In this study I follow the latter position and thus use those terms interchangeably.

3.1.2.2 Narrative as a Strategic Medium for Self-presentation

Echoing the reflexive and interpretive characteristics of storytelling, Miller (2005: 23), drawing from her study of first-time motherhood in Western and Eastern societies, proposed that individuals use narratives strategically as a vehicle for ‘positioning and presenting oneself as a competent social actor in the social world’. Tellers employ narratives in a tactical manner in order to make a particular impression of themselves to their audience(s). The life history interviewing of Ginsburg (1989) with women who were involved either in pro-choice or pro-life activism in the USA effectively demonstrated this: what was striking in their life stories was that both groups of women presented themselves and their biographical paths in a way that justified their involvement with a particular activism. Thus, regardless of their apparent opposite standpoint, she argued that both groups of women were depicted as a heroic protagonist who did the right thing not just for themselves but also for others in their stories. In a similar vein, the research of Riessman (1990) on the narratives of divorced men and women in the USA illustrated how strategically those individuals used narratives as a means to make claims about themselves and justify their actions. Likewise, in chapters 6 and 7 my analysis of data generated for this thesis indicates that both home-stay and working mothers with East Asian heritage present themselves as ‘good’ mothers and their work decision as ultimately beneficial to their children in their narrations. This representation of ‘good’ mothering ideology held by individual mothers through their stories brings our attention to the close connection between narratives and ideology. Eakin (1999) suggested that even though personal stories are perceived to be a reflection of an individual sense of identity and self, this should be mediated by the dominant forms of social and cultural ideology and discourse. In a similar vein, Miller (2005) proposed that the ways in which women construct their narratives draw upon the dominant social and cultural knowledge available to them. In this sense, according to Miller (*ibid.*), the ways women present themselves in their narratives in a particular fashion, such as ‘good’ and/or ‘competent’ mothers, are based on culturally scripted ideas about what constitutes ‘good’ or ‘ideal’ mothering within a particular context.

3.1.2.3 Storytelling as a Means of Achieving a Sense of Biographical Continuity and Unity

By organising disorderly events into a coherently emplotted whole, it has been suggested that an individual biography gains unity in a narrative story (Polkinghorne 1995). Through the construction of storied accounts of disruptions people are thought to create meaning and a sense of order in their lives (Frank 2002; Bell 2009). Storytelling therefore, Maynes et al. (2008) argued, enables individuals to create a subjective sense of continuity in their biographies as well as making connections between the present and past selves. This may be particularly relevant to those who have experienced traumatic events or disarray. Gabriel et al. (2010), based on their study of unemployed professionals, highlighted the salience of storytelling as a vehicle for sense-making and recreating identity. Their findings indicated that the individuals facing the biographical disruption of unemployment were able to create a coherent self in their narrative accounts. In addition, Bell's (2009) research on the daughters of DES (diethylstilbestrol) users illustrated the vital role of narratives for those women in understanding and coming to terms with their traumatic experiences of illness and reproductive problems as a result of their exposure to a drug called DES. In chapter 6 I will draw on my data to demonstrate how telling life stories can be an effective way of finding a new meaning and achieving a sense of flow in their biographies for East Asian mothers in England who might have encountered disjuncture as a consequence of migration and (or) motherhood.

3.1.2.4 The Interpersonal and Interactional Characteristics of Narratives

Meanwhile, Somers (1994) indicated that the stories individuals tell are not produced in a vacuum but interactionally and interpersonally. Maynes et al. (2008) suggested that narrative accounts are created in a specific context for a specific audience or audiences. Mishler (1986) maintained that interaction between the teller and her audience is vital in the actual interview process as well as understanding and analysing their narratives. Erel (2009) similarly asserted that the presence of the interviewer and the ways in which she interacts with the narrator is constitutive of the production of the narrative account. In this specific sense, narrative is seen as a joint production (The Personal Narratives Group 1989;

Riessman 1990, 1993; Bell 2009). At the same time, individual narratives are thought to elucidate not only personal accounts of their experiences but also existing social structures, which have a direct and indirect effect on their lives (Yans-McLaughlin 1990). Personal narratives are also considered to illustrate the interplay between individual agency and social condition (The Personal Narratives Group 1989; Riessman 1993; Maynes et al. 2008). Thus, the investigation of personal narratives is said to offer the opportunity to fathom agency and its motivations as well as how they interact with structural issues within a particular time and space. Ginsburg (1989) in her procreation study claimed that individual stories are the resultant products of inextricably interwoven relationships between their personal experience and particular understanding of culture in which their experience was produced. For example, her pro-choice activists tended to have reached their adulthood in the late 1960s and early 1970s when feminism and reproductive rights movement in the USA were ascendant; whereas the majority of pro-life activists experienced the transition to motherhood in the late 1970s or even more recently when feminist movement was on the wane and pro-life activism was on the rise in the USA. She argued this demonstrates that seemingly 'private' stories in fact reflect specific cultural and historical milieux in which these stories are situated. Drawing on my interview data, in chapters 6 and 7 I will illustrate how these intersecting relations have played out in the lives of East Asian mothers in a particular context, as well as in different temporal and spatial settings - e.g. from China where women with children were encouraged to work based on Chairman Mao's Communist work ethic into England where an intensive mothering ideology is a dominant cultural norm.

3.1.2.5 Discussion

The exploration of narratives is thought to help us gain a more holistic view of an individual life and how their identities have evolved over the years. Also, the above literature has indicated that studying narrative accounts may allow us to see the ways in which individuals engage in the construction of their identity in a fuller fashion. In addition, the work of Maynes et al. (2008) indicated that life stories enable us to examine the social condition where individuals' personal experiences are produced, alongside their agency. Hence, it has the potential of being an extremely efficacious tool to investigate the production and reproduction of identity. Whilst authors such as Gabriel et al. (2010) have

asserted that people make sense of their life and themselves through the stories they tell, academics have indicated that another significant way in which people deploy themselves in defining their identity is through differentiating themselves from others (Woodward 1997). Johnston and Swanson (2004, 2006) suggested that this is prevalently found among mothers as a means for them to make claims about themselves as ‘good’ mothers, compared to those who are perceived to belong to dissimilar social groups.

3.1.3 ‘Othering’

3.1.3.1 Theorising the Other

Woodward (1997) argued that the construction of identity is relational, since a principal way individuals constitute a sense of self is through differentiation from the Other (see also Hall 1997). By means of what Douglas (1966) called symbolic boundary drawing, individuals in a social group engage in the practices of inclusion and exclusion (see also Lewis and Phoenix 2004; Jenkins 2008). Put differently, a body of literature has indicated that people make sense of who they are by marking the difference and separating themselves from the perceived Other. Thus, ‘othering’ is an instrumental device for individuals to define their identity and position themselves in a particular place within society. Hall (1997) pointed out that ‘othering’ entails the mechanism of stereotyping, in which the Other is perceived in relation to a set of fixed, simple and inherent characteristics. Similarly, Bhabha (1990) suggested that stereotype, as a major discursive strategy, derives its power from fixing a set of rigid images to a particular social group. Hence, rather than seeing members in the perceived Other social group as individuals with complex and dynamic characteristics, he argued that people tend to be associated with one or two simple and intrinsic attributes. For instance, Said (1978) eloquently illuminated the engagement of the West in the discursive construction of the East as the inferior Other, predicated upon the essentialist notion of the Orient as “backward”, “uncivilised” and “barbaric”, different from the Occident.

3.1.3.2 ‘Othering’ as a Way of Constructing Motherhood Identity

Whilst the debate over the Other and ‘othering’ has prevailed among the academic discourse around ‘racial’ and ethnic relations (e.g. Miles 1989; Said 1978), existing literature on motherhood has also indicated that ‘othering’ is a vital instrument in the formation of identity for mothers, with them making comparison between themselves and mothers of different employment status (Hays 1996; Douglas and Michaels 2004; Johnston and Swanson 2004, 2006). According to Hays (1996), there exists the cultural contradiction between the logic of the self-focused market place and that of selflessly giving intensive motherhood in Western societies. Within this contradictory logic, all women with children are culturally pressured to conform to intensive mothering, regardless of their involvement in economic activity. At the same time, such cultural ambivalence has become the basis for what some call the “Mother War” between women who choose to stay home to care for their children and those who try to combine employment with childcare. Indeed, the research of Johnston and Swanson (2004, 2006) seemed to affirm mothers’ engagement in the negative depiction of the Other mothers who have a different employment status from them as a result of the internalisation of the dichotomous construction of the public sphere of work and the private arena of mothering. In this process of ‘othering’ mothers tended to portray the Other mothers using the stereotypical imagery, overlooking their individual diversity. Drawing on this, in chapters 6 and 7 I will present evidence that East Asian mothers in my study also participate in ‘othering’ as a way of making sense of their motherhood experiences and their identity. I will demonstrate how ‘othering’ is employed for these mothers in constituting their motherhood identity.

3.1.4 Conclusion

The combination of ideology and discursive approach with the examination of narratives and the deployment of ‘othering’ provides an effective means of fathoming the complex and multifarious characteristics of mothering experiences and motherhood identity of East Asian women living in England. However, the data generated for this thesis and analysed in subsequent chapters indicates that the complexity involved in examining the identity of ethnic minority women is such that these theories alone are not sufficient to offer a more

complete level of understanding of the issue. This is particularly so considering that motherhood identity cannot exist in isolation. In chapter 8, using evidence from my interviews, I will argue that motherhood identity is the outcome of the constant interaction with other social relations and organisations, such as ethnicity and class. In the ensuing section I will examine an array of concepts that authors have indicated and that I found to be salient in comprehending the identity issues of ethnic minority women with children in the analysis of the interview data.

3.2 Theorising the Intersection of Gender, Ethnicity and Class

In order to examine the intersecting relations of gender with ethnicity and class, it is necessary to discuss notions and debates around gender, ethnicity and class. Based on this, the first part of this section examines the theorisation of female subordination, by critically analysing the concept of patriarchy and Connell's three dimensions of gender. The second part seeks to define the concept of a nation, *ethnie* and culture used in this study, together with debates about culture in understanding ethnicity and ethnic identity in a diasporic context. Then, I investigate the concept of class and its continuing relevance to sociological studies as discussed in the literature. Bringing these all together, the final part presents 'intersectionality' as a way of framing the motherhood identity of minority ethnic women in this study. Alongside the principal facets of ideology and discursive approach, narratives and othering, when coding and analysing my interviews I found the concept of 'intersectionality' to be a vital means of understanding the motherhood identity of East Asian women in England.

3.2.1 Theorising Asymmetrical Gender Relations

Beechey (1979) proposed that patriarchy facilitates the assertion of male domination over females. The concept has been widely used among feminists (especially white feminists) as a means of explicating women's subordination. On the other hand, it has also been the target of criticism due to its limited capacity to explain contextually diverse experiences of

female and male oppression. This criticism especially came from black feminists, who claimed that the overarching concept of patriarchy ignored various forms of oppression and inequality experienced by black women and men (Joseph 1981; Carby 1982; Parmar 1982; Amos and Parmar 1984; Hill-Collins 1990; Brah and Phoenix 2004). Consistent with this, Connell (1987, 2005), repudiating a single structural explanation of gender, claimed that the asymmetrical gender relations are not the result of a simplistic or uniform process of male domination over females. Rather, there exist a number of varied forms of masculinity and femininity that make it possible for the continuation of male ascendancy over females. In this theorisation, Connell employed the term ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘emphasised femininity’ in order to demonstrate the culturally dominant characteristics of gender relations, particularly in Western societies.

Based on these, this section examines the subordinated position of women in society, starting with the analysis of the concept of patriarchy, specifically focusing on Walby’s six patriarchal structures. This is followed by Connell’s three structures of gender relations, in comparison with Walby’s six structures of patriarchy, accompanied by the concepts of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘emphasised femininity.’ Finally, it presents the theoretical position of gender relations taken in this study, drawing on the discussion of Walby’s and Connell’s work.

3.2.1.1 Walby’s Six Structures of Patriarchy

Walby (1989: 214) denoted patriarchy as ‘a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.’ However, as noted above, the concept of patriarchy has been heavily criticised due to its oversimplification of varied modes of asymmetrical social relations. In order to overcome this shortcoming Walby (1989) developed a new model of patriarchy consisting of six patriarchal structures, replacing the simple base-structure format. They are: a patriarchal mode of production in the household; patriarchal relations in the labour market; the patriarchal state; male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality; and patriarchal culture.

According to Walby (1989), the central feature of a patriarchal mode of production in the family is the division of household labour between men and women. Women perform

domestic labour, such as cleaning, cooking and childcare, for their husbands who are the expropriators of their labour. For Walby, this division of labour in the household is not confined to the domestic sphere but has significant implications for other arenas of social relations. Alongside the patriarchal mode in the family, another patriarchal structure at the economic level includes patriarchal relations in the labour market. Walby noted that its central feature is men's ongoing struggle to maintain their advantageous position in the labour market through the exclusion of females from the economic activity or the segregation of women within it. Walby contended that this has determinate effects on paid employment as well as other aspects of gender relations as a result of the devaluation of female work and their lower wages. Regarding the third patriarchal structure, Walby argued that the state is not a gender neutral institution with its highly patriarchal characteristics. Women are excluded from access to state resources as a result of lack of power within the gendered political sphere and a relatively absent representation of women in the state. This patriarchal state takes a significant impact on gender relations by participating in such practices as shaping the rules on fertility, by either legalising or criminalising abortion, and on wage disparity between men and women. The fourth patriarchal structure is male violence towards women, which Walby described as deeply embedded in structural power inequality, rather than reflecting a random individual phenomenon. Walby claimed that violence as a form of men's power over women is composed of varied modes of practice such as rape, wife-beating, and sexual assault/harassment at work. Such violence, according to Walby, is commonly identifiable in the normal patterns of men's behavior instead of being confined to a minority of men or a violent sub-culture. This, she argued, has a significant impact on women's actions as a result of fear of male violence. For Walby (1989) sexuality was also seen as a significant patriarchal structure, within which heterosexuality was given primacy over homosexuality, which contributed to the production of unequal relations in sexual practice. She pointed out that sexuality is comprised of culturally and historically varied social practices that cannot be reduced to biological or psychological dimensions. Patriarchal culture refers to a structure made up with diverse sets of patriarchal practices (Walby 1989). In this Walby stressed that patriarchal culture should be seen as 'a set of discourses which are institutionally-rooted' (1989: 227). Walby argued that discourses on masculinity and femininity are deeply entrenched in every aspect of social life, including the media, education and religion, which has significant implications for cultural production.

Walby proposed that these six patriarchal structures are able to sufficiently deal with historically, spatially and culturally diverse modes of gender inequality. Patriarchy, according to Walby, can take divergent forms contingent upon the interaction of these patriarchal structures. The importance of structures is likely to vary at different times and places, and the removal of any one patriarchal structure does not cause the collapse of the system as a whole.

3.2.1.2 Connell's Three Structures of Gender Relations

Comparable to Walby's structural approaches to some degree, Connell (1987, 2005) suggested three modes of gender structure: production relations, power relations, and emotional relations (cathexis). Production relations refer to the gendered division of labour in the household as well as in the labour market. Connell (1987) pointed out that the sexual segregation of jobs has a consequential impact on further social practice, such as training and skilling. That is, men tend to be better trained and skilled than women, which in effect serves to legitimise the discriminatory behaviour of employers. This sexual division of work, Connell (ibid.) argued, is not confined to the sphere of paid-employment, with evidence indicating a persistent pattern of the gender segregated work at home. Also, her interview with men in Australia revealed that most men she came across were resistant to the idea of men taking a major role in housework and childcare (Connell 1987). This indicates that the division of labour between men and women is grounded in strong cultural support. The practice of excluding females from the labour market forces women to stay at home as housewives; moreover, these production relations continue within the paid work sphere through occupational segregation. This includes differential wage rates between men and women, together with a high concentration of women in less skilled and less secure jobs. Consequently, it results in the disparity of economic accumulation between men and women, which is similar to Walby's two substructures of a patriarchal mode of production at home and patriarchal relations in the labour market.

With regards to power relations in Connell's (1987) work, they include men's collective power over women; 'hegemonic masculinity' over subordinate forms of masculinity. According to Connell (2005), despite the existence of local divergence, such as female

headed households, as well as many kinds of resistance from (e.g. feminism), male domination over females still persists. Also, for Connell (1987), such an example as violence is closely related to the structure of power, deeply entrenched in power asymmetry and ideologies of male supremacy. This can be compared to Walby's structure of male violence, which regards violence reflecting power inequality between men and women. However, Connell (ibid.) went on further to argue that violence simultaneously enables men to maintain power. In line with Walby, Connell (1987) viewed the state as a highly gendered institution. Connell argued that the composition of the state personnel is a strong indication of its gendered characteristics, in conjunction with its engagement with significant ideological activity, such as population management and control over sexuality by criminalising homosexuals.

As for cathexis, Connell (1987, 2005) suggested that emotional desires relating to sexual desire, sexuality and parenting are gendered, rather than natural. By prohibiting sexual relationships between certain people, such as the incest taboo and homosexuality, desire is socially constructed. For example, the organisation of relationships in contemporary Western culture is depicted as grounded in the dichotomy of man and woman, opposing characteristics of masculine and feminine and the organisation of sexual practice in couple relationships (Connell 1987). In this regard, cathexis is said to presuppose unequal power relations between men and women, with the resultant sexualisation of females. Similarly, Walby suggested that sexuality is a significant structural force, which imposes constraints on individual women by giving a preference to heterosexual relationships.

According to Connell (1987), these three structures do not operate independently; rather they interplay with each other, producing 'the gender order' in which men dominate women at the most general level. Based on this single structural reality of male dominance over female at the global level, Connell proposed the different concepts of masculinities and femininities, which are the focus of the following section.

3.2.1.2.1 'Hegemonic Masculinity' and 'Emphasised Femininity'

Connell (1987, 2005) argued that 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity' characterise dominant modes of gendered being in Western societies. Instead of seeing

masculinity and femininity as a monolithic form, Connell (ibid.) recognised different types of masculinity and femininity, such as white masculinity, black masculinity and working-class masculinity, emphasised femininity and resistant femininity. These multiple categories of gender identities are framed in relation to 'hegemonic masculinity', which she defined as the most commonly accepted notion of being a male in any given society that 'guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (Connell 2005: 77). However, Connell stressed that this 'hegemonic masculinity' is not a fixed form that cannot be challenged and changed but a "currently accepted" strategy' (2005: 77). For Connell (1987: 183), 'hegemonic masculinity' is always formed in connection with 'various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women'; the interaction between divergent forms of masculinity is significant in explaining how patriarchal social relations operate. As a counterpoint of 'hegemonic masculinity', Connell coined the term 'emphasised femininity'. 'Emphasised femininity' entails female compliance with their subordination to men, and their submissive and caring attributes that are designed to meet men's interests and desires. Connell's concept of 'emphasised femininity' was formulated, particularly in order to stress the relational characteristics of gender and the unequal positions of masculinities and femininities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). 'Resistant femininity', Connell (1987: 183) described, as being 'strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance', such as feminism and lesbian relationships, which do not comply with stereotypical modes of femininity. Such strategies of resistance or non-compliance might also be applied to the practices of women who do not follow the stereotypical gender norms and/or practices, such as taking the primary care role in domestic sphere. This conceptualisation is evidently useful in understanding the ongoing male domination over females, especially in association with the idea of 'hegemonic masculinity'. However, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) acknowledged, the notion of 'emphasised femininity' overlooked the agency of subordinated groups and the newly emerging characteristics of female identity and practice. For example, professional women may acquire facets of 'hegemonic masculinity' in the course of participating in their career.

Nevertheless, Connell's theory of masculinities and femininities recognises the multiple layers of power relations, thus avoiding the conceptualisation of power in terms of sex difference only. In chapter 5 I will draw on my interview data, providing the evidence that the power position of some East Asian women in England may not be dominated by the

patriarchal ideology dominant in Confucian East Asian contexts as a result of migration and different gender dynamics originating from their marriage to men who support gender equal practices. In this sense, although Connell's theorisation is mainly centred on Western societies, it can also apply to the situation of some East Asian women living in England. Moreover, as will be discussed in chapters 5 and 8 it can accommodate diversities and possibilities of changes in gender relations (e.g. equal marriage relationships rather than traditional patriarchal relations). Hence, based on the analysis of my data discussed in ensuing chapters, it can be suggested that while 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity' offer tools to analyse the traditional patterns of gendered motherhood experiences for East Asian women, they may also allow me to explain any divergent phenomena from conventional practices of childcare and housework.

3.2.2 Discussion

As examined above, there are many similarities between Connell's structural explanation of gender and Walby's six structures of patriarchy although their theorisations entail significant differences. By conceptualising patriarchy predicated on diverse structures rather than on a singular base, Walby offered more flexible forms of understanding female subordination than before. However, despite her attempt to resolve the limitations, underlying questions regarding patriarchy remain. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) pointed out, Walby's conceptualisation of patriarchy has a fundamental problem because the distinctive characteristics of patriarchy have to be retained within each structure of her theory and thus patriarchal characteristics are found in all gender relations. In a similar vein, not all male and female relationships can be defined in patriarchal terms: for instance, some couples in my study (see chapter 5) reportedly practise egalitarian relationships. In addition, Joseph (1981) claimed that the primary site of oppression for ethnic minority women can be significantly different from that of white majority women. As a result, she argued that white feminist analysis that focuses upon sexual inequality between men and women has overlooked the position of women of colour whose central location of oppression has been racism. Hence, for Joseph patriarchy that essentially divides men and women is too facile to fathom the experiences of black women. Similarly, Carby (1982: 213) pointed out that the concept of patriarchy alone cannot offer an effectual means to

analyse the conditions of black women who are subject to ‘the *simultaneous* oppression of patriarchy, class and ‘race’.

Thus, despite her attempt to provide more flexible and inclusive ways of explaining varied forms of women’s subordination in different historical and cultural locations, Walby’s concept of patriarchy is still considered to be inadequate as an analytical instrument for explaining divergent forms of inequality that are inextricably interconnected with each other. Having said that, patriarchy has been such an influential concept and continues to be seen as important in explicating the suppression of women’s experiences of East Asian women, especially in relation to Confucianism (Sung 2003; Won and Pascall 2004; Pascall and Sung 2007). Thus, discarding the notion of patriarchy altogether would have made the analysis of first generation East Asian women’s lives in my research extremely difficult and thus the use of the notion in explaining certain modes of beliefs and behavior seem inevitable. However, using the word patriarchy could imply the acceptance of its overarching position over and above any other categories, as Bradley (1996) suggested. On the basis of her proposition (ibid.: 44), ‘patriarchal ideologies’ or ‘patriarchal practices’ or ‘patriarchal relations’ will therefore be used in ensuing chapters, instead of the term ‘patriarchy’ in order to avoid elevating ‘gender divisions above class and ethnicity’.

In the meantime, given the limitations of patriarchy in explaining varied gender relations, I found Connell’s concepts of gender relations to be more useful in analysing my data, open to diverse categories of masculinity and femininity, as well as their shifting positions of power. I consider that Connell’s conceptualisation of gender relations offers a more encompassing theoretical instrument, framing the gendered experiences of East Asian women more effectively. Founded on this, her concepts will be employed as a main analytical tool alongside the notions of patriarchy. Meanwhile, literature has indicated that gender relations always exist in intersection with ethnicity and class (Bradley 1996, 2007). Thus, now I turn to examine the concepts of nation, *ethnie* and culture alongside key theoretical debates around these issues.

3.3 National Identity, Ethnic Identity and Culture

3.3.1 Nation⁶ and *ethnie*

Hobsbawm (1990) stated that despite its seemingly natural and primordial appeal, the modern sense of the term ‘nation’ is a relatively recent phenomenon that has emerged and widely been used since the eighteenth century. Smith (1991: 14) denoted a nation as:

A named human population sharing an historical territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.

As can be drawn from the above definition, the nation is not an objective entity but a subjective construct, predicated upon the existence of common heritage and culture. Reminiscent of this subjective quality, Anderson (1983: 6) defined the nation as ‘an imagined political community’. According to Anderson, it is ‘imagined’ because even if the members of the nation will never know, meet or even hear of most of their fellow members, they feel a sense of affinity with other members within the same nation.

National identities are thought to be constructed and strengthened through socialisation, such as compulsory and mass education provided by the government, which endeavours to inculcate nationalist ideals and a unique, homogeneous culture into its people (Shopflin 2000). Also, the nation is said to provide social bonds among its people by means of the

⁶ Both nation and *ethnie* are equally worth being examined in this study because of complicated relations between Hong Kong and China. The territory of Hong Kong was incorporated into China during the Qin Dynasty (221 BC - 206 BC). However, in the 19th century, after the British victory over China in the Opium War, Hong Kong came under the rule of the United Kingdom until the British handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. Since then, Hong Kong has become part of the Republic of China. While women in my study frequently referred back to their national cultural heritage, given this historical development, Hong Kong is not said to be an independent nation-state in political terms, although it has developed a different socio, political, economic and cultural environment from mainland China. In this respect, for mothers from Hong Kong the term nation is not adequate. Thus, the majority of the time the term ethnicity, ethnic identity, ethnic heritage or ethnic culture is used in the following chapters. However, when appropriate, the word national heritage or national culture is also used.

repertory of shared values, symbols and traditions (Smith 2007). The national symbols, such as flags and anthems, are thought to remind its members of their common heritage and cultural ties as well as reinforcing their sense of belonging and common identity (Smith 1991). Hence, Elgenius (2007) argued that the use of such symbols is a central mechanism of producing and maintaining national identity. For Shopflin (2000), national communities engage in the reproduction of culture in order to maintain its survival and existence. In this sense, he argued that national identity becomes a powerful tool for defining and locating individual selves within the world. However, at the same time, Hobsbawm (1990) noted that the nation is not a fixed entity and is a product of a particular historical period. He went on to assert that national identification can change at different times and geographical spaces.

According to Smith (1991), the formation of the nation always involves ethnic elements and there are a number of overlapping qualities in the concepts of a nation and *ethnie* although they are not synonymous. Hutchinson and Smith (1996: 6) defined *ethnie* as:

A named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members.

Ethnie is different from a nation in the sense that its link with a territory is historical and symbolic whereas the nation's link with a territory is physical and actual (Smith 1991). Also, Rex (1996) suggested that *ethnie* can be distinguished from a modern political nation, based on its subordination of economic and political structures to the community structure, which is founded on perceived shared common heritage and culture. However, at the same time, Smith (1991) suggested that in the conceptualisation of both the nation and *ethnie* subjective elements are notable: for instance, myths of common ancestry and culture indicate their fictive and putative characteristics. Beck (2000) argued that in particular, for people who have divorced from their homelands attachments to a specific territory or land have a strongly mythical and subjective quality. Thus, Safran (2007) suggested that for people located outside their homelands their collective identities are founded on 'memories' of or 'imagined' common religious, cultural heritage and traditions.

3.3.1.1 The Major Debate over Ethnicity⁷ and Ethnic Identity

In recent years, ethnicity and ethnic identity have attracted a considerable amount of attention from scholars, and there has been a proliferation of literature concerning these issues (Kibria 1998; Nazroo and Karlsen 2003; Portes et al. 2005; Zhou and Xiong 2005; Erel 2009). The major debate over ethnicity and ethnic identity is centred on whether ethnic allegiance and membership are innate aspects of a human existence which has primordial attachments originating from common heritage and blood ties, or a social construct that is produced through interaction between people and is capable of changing throughout individual life history.

The primordial view of ethnicity and ethnic identity, put forward by authors like Geertz (1963), claims that ethnicity is a foundational element of human life that is naturally given and essentially unchangeable, based on blood ties. However, this primordial perspective of ethnicity and ethnic identity has been criticised by many scholars for positioning a culturally essentialist view (see Barth 1969; Wallman 1978; Hein 1994; Lal 2001; Song 2003; Jenkins 2008). The instrumentalist or situationalist perspective, utilised by Barth (1969), was used to argue that ethnic attachments are neither natural nor eternal as they can change over time and space (Wallman 1978). Opposite to the primordialist stance that sees human action as value-orientated, the instrumentalist model views human action as rationally orientated, seeking practical goals. Therefore, according to this model, ethnic groups exist primarily as a means to achieve a collective advantage because individuals with shared interests coalesce into groups with the aim of attaining those interests (Bentley 1987). In this respect, authors have suggested that the discernible cultural characteristics of an ethnic group take less of a significant place in understanding ethnic group membership and group boundary drawing. For example, Leach (1954), drawing from his research among the Kachins of northern Burma, challenged the conventional idea that an ethnic group is formed on the basis of a set of distinctive cultural traits. Instead, Leach claimed that ethnic group boundaries are produced by subjective processes of categorical ascription that have no necessary relationship to perceived cultural distinctiveness. Similarly, Barth

⁷ Based on the definition of the term *ethnie* presented so far, the word ethnicity will be used as a main reference to the analysis and discussion of the literature and data.

(1969), based on his understanding of culture as contingent, put forward the idea that shared culture is the outcome of processes of ethnic boundary maintenance rather than a prime cause for the existence of ethnic groups. Thus, in his model, the focus of investigation was shifted from culture to the preservation of ethnic boundaries in the interaction between different ethnic groups that takes place across the boundary. This instrumentalist understanding has made a valuable contribution to the studies of ethnicity and ethnic identity. It has encouraged a shift away from determinism by placing an emphasis on the social processes and practices of social actors. Also, it has discouraged the encroachment of biologically founded notions of 'race' on social analysis by stressing the socially constructed characteristics of ethnicity and ethnic identity. Finally, the significance attached to the subjective views of actors is said to have offered the possibility of a move away from the taken-for-granted ethnocentrism of much social science (Jenkins 2008: 21).

On the other hand, Handelman (1977) posed questions about the Barthian view of ethnic groups whilst acknowledging the significance of boundaries and the situational flexibility of ethnic membership. According to Handelman, Barth largely ignores other aspects of ethnicity and ethnic identity, such as culture, being 'drawn implicitly to the idea of the "ethnic group", either for its capacity to maintain itself as a corporate entity or for its capacity for political activity' (1977: 188). He further criticised Barth for undervaluing the importance of culture in the formation of ethnic group by placing too much emphasis on the ethnic boundary:

'Cultural stuff' ... and ethnic boundary mutually modify and support one another. The former establishes and legitimises the contrast of the boundary; while the latter, often in response to external conditions, modifies, alters the relevance to the boundary of aspects of the former. (1977: 200)

Handelman (1977: 190) suggested that culture 'attributes to members some expectations as to how they are to behave, the resources (linguistic, customary) they are expected to introduce into their behaviours, and the patterns of activity that they will engage in.' Thus, for Handelman, the cultural substance of an ethnic group is an important facet of ethnic group formation and maintenance.

In a similar vein, Smith (1991) claimed that we should not overstate the malleability of ethnic boundaries or the fluidity of their cultural contents because this would hinder us from recognising and understanding the persistence of ethnic ties and communities and their durability over and above boundary. Thus, undue emphasis on boundary maintenance proposed by the instrumentalist accounts can fail to consider the significance of cultural affinities.

3.3.1.2 Debate over Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity in a Diasporic Context

Issues around culture continue to dominate the debate over ethnicity and ethnic identity in a diasporic context. Hall (1990, 1998) offered a new way of understanding the concept of culture and identity whilst maintaining the importance of culture in investigating ethnicity and ethnic identity in diasporic space. For Hall (1990) identity is in a constant process of developing, 'positioned' in a particular historical and cultural context. On the basis of this, Hall (1990: 223) suggested that we should move away from the conceptualisation of cultural identity⁸ as:

One, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed selves, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history.

According to Hall, while the above way of defining cultural identity has played an important part in the experiences of Black Caribbean people in the UK (and other ethnic minorities), it does overlook diversity and differences existing within the group. For Hall,

⁸ Hall uses the term cultural identity synonymously with ethnic identity here.

cultural identity is 'a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being' (p.225). Thus, cultural identities transform constantly, rather than stay fixed eternally in the essentialist past:

The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual 'past', since our relation to it, like the child's relation to the mother, is always already 'after the break'. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*. (Hall 1990: 226)

Although Hall asserted above that the diasporic individuals continue to maintain a tie with their homeland through 'memory, fantasy, narrative and myth', he suggested that their cultural identities should not be seen as firmly fixated in their past. Rather, he contended that their identities should be regarded as constantly produced and reproduced through divergence within new cultural environments (Hall 1990). In this sense, the notion of hybridity may be a useful tool for exploring the identity formation of the individuals in a transnational setting. According to Bhabha (1994: 10), 'the borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present...it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present.' Thus, for Hall (1988), the notion of hybridity signifies the idea of 'new ethnicities', offering a non-essentialist, dynamic concept of identities. In this formulation ethnicity and ethnic identity are reconfigured and recreated within transnational space whilst drawing both from the homeland and from the society of settlement. Such a reformulation of identities and cultures appears to open up a space for interpenetration and translation, and identities are in a constant process of being made and remade.

At the other end of the spectrum, Anthias (1992, 1998, 2001) was highly critical of Hall's approach, especially the way ethnicity is treated as equivalent to cultural identity, associating ethnic groups principally in relation to cultural communities, based on the assumption that ethnic groups share distinctive cultures. Anthias (2001) claimed that despite its contribution to challenging the cultural essentialist view and static notions of

ethnicity, culture, and identity, the concept of hybridity maintains its tie to cultural heritage. This in effect shares commonalities with the old concept of ethnicity that regards culture as the principal constituent of ethnic belonging and that conceptualises ethnicity as ‘a static cultural property’ (Anthias 1992: 15). According to Anthias (2001), it is incongruous that while dissociating itself from the old ethnicity paradigm, the notion of hybridity retains a close connection with culture, rather than the ethnic boundary. Another problem with hybridity for Anthias (1992) is its conceptualisation is founded on the assumption of a voluntaristic and free-floating individual, which ignores structural constraints. For Anthias (1992, 1998, 2001), ethnicity is not simply a question of ethnic identity or a shared culture. Rather, it also encompasses the social conditions in which a social group is positioned in a particular way, in interplaying with other social divisions, such as class and gender.

Founded on Anthias’s argument, in chapters 6 and 7 I will present the evidence that shows how social and cultural forces shape individual women’s experiences, because ethnicity should be understood not only in relation to agency but also in connection with structural conditions in which agency is exercised. Also, in these subsequent chapters I will demonstrate how ethnicity intersects with other social factors, such as gender and class. In addition, supporting Anthias’s criticism of Hall treating ethnicity and ethnic identity synonymous with cultural identity, in these findings’ chapters I will treat culture as part of ethnicity or ethnic identity, not as equivalent. On the other hand, her rejection of culture as an important component of ethnic groups, by placing strong emphasis on boundary maintenance, raises some questions. Without doubt, it is crucial not to fall into cultural essentialism, yet, as Handelman (1977) and Smith (1991) proposed, it does not mean culture should be ignored or treated lightly in people’s experiences. Even if it is imagined or based on putative beliefs, cultural facets can have a concrete impact on the lives of individuals. In Chapter 6 for instance, Minju, a mother from Korea, talks about the Korean way of life as if there are clearly defined Korean cultural norms; even if she is living outside Korea, her ‘perceived’ Korean cultural values and practices directly shape her daily life. Hence, it is crucial to recognise the vitality of culture for those individuals situated in a transnational milieu whilst keeping in mind that it is relational and fluid, and prone to change. Simultaneously, Beck (2000) suggested that it is important to remember that a transnational idea of homeland is ‘invented’ or recreated, rather than the factual replica of a nation in a different geographical setting. For example, African cultures represented during

the Notting Hill festival in London are not the same as African cultures in its original locality (Beck *ibid.*); thus, Africa in this context can be seen as an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983) reconstructed in a transnational location. In this regard, Hall’s notion of ‘new ethnicity’ in diasporic space provides a valuable means to examine the culture, ethnicity and ethnic identity of migrant women. Through his notion, it is possible to explore how the memory of homeland is intermingled and reproduced in a transnational context.

3.3.2 Culture

3.3.2.1 Defining Culture

As can be seen in the above section, culture is an important concept in understanding the lives of migrant individuals. However, as Williams (1981) patently stated, the term ‘culture’ is highly complex, entailing diverse meanings. Thus, it is imperative to clearly define the meaning of culture adopted in this study.

Hoebel (1956: 168) delineated culture as ‘the integrated sum total of learned behaviour traits which are manifest and shared by the members of a society’. In this definition Hoebel stressed the vital importance of ‘learned’ behaviour which originates entirely socially, unlike animals whose behaviours are thought to be grounded in their instincts or other biologically inherited characteristics. Hoebel indicated that a culture maintains internal integration in conformity with dominant norms and values which are founded upon an assumption about the nature of things and what is desirable or undesirable. In this sense, culture entails not only discourse rooted in institutional practices as Walby (1989) proposed but also ideologies that affect the way individuals make sense of their surrounding world. Analogous to Hoebel, Williams (1981: 11) defined culture as ‘the ‘whole way of life’ of a distinct people or other social group’. In his examination of the historical development of the concept Williams went further to provide more detailed meanings of culture. According to Williams, ‘cultural practice’ or ‘cultural production’ is not merely produced by social order but also principal elements constituting the social order. In this sense, culture is seen as ‘the signifying system through which necessarily

(though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored' (Williams *ibid.*: 13).

These two definitions offer a foundation for defining the concept of culture. Thus, based on the above definitions, culture can be denoted as a way of life which is shared by the members of a distinctive society. In this the role of culture is seen as a signifying system is crucial since individuals in a group behave in a certain way followed by cultural norms and principles. As Hoebel (1956) pointed out, dominant forms of beliefs or values take a significant place because these value systems are believed to guide the behaviours of individuals within a social group. In chapters 5, 6 and 7 I will illustrate the salient role of cultural values and norms in shaping the gender relations and motherhood experiences of East Asian women. Simultaneously I will also demonstrate the malleable characteristics of culture, drawing on my data presented especially in chapter 5. These indicate that whilst culture influences individuals' perception and behaviour, it is possible for individuals to acquire other cultural practices and beliefs when located in a different cultural context. This has been suggested to be particularly so in the contemporary globalised world where the urban landscape is comprised of the shifting images of divergent groups of people from different cultures (Appadurai 1990). Drawing from the study of youth cultures in the North East of England, Nayak (2003) proposed that a variety of cultural options open to the individual within increasingly globalised contexts. His findings illuminate the possibility of creating hybridised forms of youth identity through the consumption of multi-national cultural products. In this, the mixing of different cultures enabled some white young people to reconfigure whiteness and to create new meanings. Whilst the existing cultural meaning attached to what it meant to be white youth changed via hybridisation, he contended that culture continued to play a crucial role in this refashioning of identity. Similarly, the research of Erel (2009) on Turkish migrant women in Germany and Britain demonstrated the importance of understanding the identity formation of migrant women as fluid and shifting, which can change through intermingling with other cultures within the society of settlement; by using their agency these women actively recreated what it meant to be Turkish women in Germany or Britain through the mixing of divergent cultures. In similar fashion, in chapters 5, 6 and 7 I will draw on my data to argue that first generation East Asian women in England are likely to engage in reinterpretation of their cultural heritage in a diasporic environment in making sense of their experiences as migrant women with

children.

3.3.2.1.1 Confucianism as the Principal ‘Cultural Stuff’ of East Asians

As seen in chapter 1, research by Yi and Nauck (2006) indicated that Confucianism is the principal culture that East Asian countries commonly share although individual societies have also developed their own distinctive ways of life in interaction with divergent economic and political development (Brinton et al. 2004). Thus, Confucianism is regarded as a crucial cultural aspect that *arguably* binds them together as well as distinguishes them from other ethnic groups (Yi and Nauck 2006).

While research points to evidence that the impact of Confucian values on East Asian countries is weakening (Ishii-Kuntz 1996; Brinton et al. 2004), a number of studies have suggested that Confucian beliefs continue to be highly influential in the everyday lives of people living in East Asian countries, in particular married women with dependent children (Allison 1991; Yuen-Tsang 1997; Pun et al. 2004; Kim 2005; Sun 2008). For instance, Sun (2008) clearly asserted and underlined the persistent gender segregation between mothers and fathers within the family in her study of childcare in the context of Taiwan. This study examined the impact of grandparental support on childcare responsibilities between couples in Taiwan where family ties were considered to be significant, originating from the Confucian tradition. The findings suggested that at the insistence of the older generation, the gender ‘norm’ between couples remained unchallenged, with women taking the brunt of childcare. This study also highlighted the pressures that working mothers encountered when their mothers-in-law looked after their children, which they argued come from unequal power relations within the Confucian hierarchy, commonly found in other East Asian countries (White 1987; Won and Pascall 2004). For example, when mothers did not agree with the way their mothers-in-law dealt with their children’s behaviour, they were often not able to express their opinions to the latter as challenging seniors, such as mothers-in-law, is not regarded as virtuous in Confucian East Asia. Based on these, it has been suggested that Confucianism has a critical impact on individual women’s lives in East Asian countries (Sung 2003; Won and Pascall 2004; Pascall and Sung 2007). However, there remains a question regarding how Confucian values and norms affect East Asian women in different socio-cultural contexts outside East Asian countries. Apart from this

exploration of culture, the class position of these women should also be investigated since research (Byrne 2006) indicates that culture and class interact. Hence, the ensuing section examines the concept of class and its continuing significance in the analysis of social enquiries.

3.3.3 Class

3.3.3.1 Defining Class

Class is an immensely contested terrain, within which various meanings and ways of measuring it are vying for attention (Pakulski and Waters 1996; Crompton 1998; Devine et al. 2005). The vast majority of the traditional approach of class analysis, developed from the classical theories of Marx and Weber, conceptualises class in occupational terms, focusing on economically active individuals, based on the presumption that the household is the basic unit of class analysis (e.g. Goldthorpe 1983, 1984; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1988; Wright 1989, 1997). However, these analytical frameworks have received a considerable amount of criticism, mainly due to their unrepresentative samples which exclude a large proportion of population, including women and the unemployed (Crompton 1998). In particular, the exclusion of women from class analysis has been the target of heavy feminist critiques, which claimed that the traditional approaches have ignored the other half of the population on sexist grounds (Edgell 1993). On top of this, the significance of ‘work’ as a prime factor in shaping individual identity and social attitudes has been questioned, with the decline in the traditional ‘working-class’ as a result of reduction in manufacturing industries alongside growth in the service sector in late twentieth century industrial societies (Lee and Turner 1996). Moreover, the emergence of the ‘cultural turn’ in recent years has brought culture as an important realm of sociological research as well as leading to investigate ‘the cultural dimensions of a variety of economic, social and political processes’ (Devine and Savage 2005: 1). Thus a narrow definition of class based on one or two categories, such as occupations and economic status, can be problematic for understanding the experiences of ethnic minority women. Drawing on these ideas, this study takes a broader definition of class. In particular, the delineation offered by Bradley (1996) may be useful. Bradley (1996: 46), whilst rejecting the

narrowness of understanding class only in relation to occupational structure, defined class as:

A label applied to a nexus of unequal lived relationships arising from the social organization of production, distribution, exchange and consumption. These include: the allocation of tasks in the division of labour (occupation, employment hierarchies); control and ownership relationship within production; the unequal distribution of surplus (wealth, income, state benefits); relationships linked to the circulation of money (markets, shareholding, investment); patterns of consumption (lifestyle, living arrangements); and distinctive cultures that arise from all these (behavioural practices, community relations).

In ensuing chapters the above definition will be employed as a guideline in the analysis and discussion of class issues with regard to the experiences of East Asian mothers in my study.

3.3.3.2 The Continuing Importance of Class

With the rise of consumption culture in post-industrial societies, some postmodern theorists (e.g. Saunders 1984; Pakulski and Waters 1996) have claimed that *consumption* has become a new foundation of social division, taking the place of *production*. Further to this argument, some social theorists have even challenged the validity of class itself as a pivotal component of social analysis on the basis of social changes generated by technological innovation and development in advanced industrial societies (Giddens 1981). For instance, Beck (1992) proposed that a proliferation of individualisation in late modernity would dissolve the traditional forms of social network, such as class, turning the developed Western world into ‘classless’ societies. According to Beck, although social inequality persists in developed industries, ‘the emergence of individualised forms and conditions of existence’ would make social class less relevant as a base of action (p. 88). As a result, Beck (1992) argued that the idea of a class based society became a thing of the past. In a similar vein, Pakulski and Waters (1996) boldly claimed ‘the death of class’, founded upon a range of shifts they identified as occurring in advanced societies. For Pakulski and Waters the emergence of new forms of stratification in industrialised societies

– for example, based on consumption - indicated the increasing irrelevance of class as a principal category of social divisions and thus its eventual dissolution.

However, despite interesting and valuable points made by the sceptics of class, many existing studies have challenged such claims (e.g. McMahon 1995; Reay 1998; Duncan 2005; Byrne 2006; Vincent et al. 2008; Taylor 2009; Wamala et al. 2009; Thomson et al. 2011). Also, many social theorists have been adamant that class remains to be a salient category that has a direct and indirect impact on people's everyday lives (e.g. Bradley 1996, 2007; Hout et al. 1996; Heath and Clifford 1996; Crompton 1998). For example, the research of McMahon (1995), which explored the experiences of Canadian middle- and working-class mothers in paid employment by using in-depth interviews, suggested a strong class divide in terms of the experiences and perceptions of motherhood. The middle-class women in her study tended to have their first child after completing their education and establishing themselves in their career, which was not the case for the majority of working-class females in this study. As a result, discourse of 'being ready for children' or the 'right time' was predominantly identified amongst middle-class women. For many middle-class mothers being a woman was not a good enough ground for motherhood; rather, they believed that women should achieve maturity before becoming a mother. By contrast, McMahon (ibid.) suggested that working-class women in her study lacked this kind of concept of readiness; for this group of women readiness referred to the taking on of responsibilities for looking after their children. At the same time, many working-class women talked about achieving maturity or being grown up through motherhood, rather than having this quality as a precondition of becoming a mother. Moreover, in regard to the question of having a child if they were doing things over again, working-class mothers were more ambivalent than their middle-class counterparts, with 11 per cent replying that they would not wish to have children again in comparison with none of the middle-class mothers. According to McMahon (1995), this ambivalence did not mean that some working-class mothers did not love their children as much as others. Instead, this was said to be indicative of concrete difficulties these women faced in raising their children without adequate financial resources.

Consistent with this, Reay (1998), based on her qualitative study of mothers' engagement in children's education in the UK, claimed that class continues to have a significant

influence on mothers' perceptions of and attitudes towards child rearing. Although women in her study did not directly refer to their class positions, their narratives were infused with classed understandings of themselves. Consequently, their discourses, as analysed by Reay (ibid.), indicated that class was a vital lens through which those mothers understood the contemporary education market. In line with this, Byrne (2006), founded on her interviews with white middle-class mothers in the UK, suggested that classed and 'raced' discourses are deeply embedded in the practices of mothering. Thus, her analysis of the accounts of middle-class mothers in this study pointed to their attempts to maintain and preserve their class status for their children by choosing 'right' social networks and schools for their children. Such classed experiences of mothering were also found in the study of Vincent et al. (2008), in which they examined the patterns of the childcare market in relation to social class in the UK. According to Vincent et al. (2008), the social class position played a decisive part in parents' involvement with the childcare market and their perceptions of the role childcare plays in their children's lives. The findings suggested that the middle-class parents mainly used private childcare market services whereas the working-class parents exclusively relied on state or voluntary sector provision, where fees were lower than many private childcare organisations. Although the cost of childcare was an issue for both groups in this study due to high UK costs, many of the middle-class parents in this research were able to pay for the care service they wanted to, which was not the case for their working-class counterparts. Consonant with this, Taylor (2009), based on her investigation of the gendered and classed experiences of lesbian and gay parents in the UK, argued that parenting practices and choices are mediated and influenced by class. For example, whilst local schools were described as 'good enough' for their children and thus an obvious choice for the majority of working-class parents, being local did not automatically constitute 'good' or 'right' schools for their children from the perspective of middle-class parents in her research. Hence, some middle-class parents chose to move or relocate to good catchment areas, which could lead to the educational success of their children as well as the more favourable treatment of non-heterosexual parentage.

These studies have indicated that different class positions have affected the experiences and perceptions of motherhood differently. Additionally, they have suggested that childcare opportunities and choices have been strongly bound by the class positions of parents. In particular, as Byrne (2006) illuminated effectively, class should not be considered in

isolation as it intermeshes with other social relations and organisations, such as gender and ethnicity (Bradley 1996, 2007; Crompton 1998). Crompton (1998) claimed that class cannot be examined adequately based on occupational terms alone and thus has to be analysed in relation to other social organisations and institutions. Similarly, Bradley (1996) argued that gender and ethnicity are important components in understanding class appropriately since they are integral parts and inseparable sources of class division, along with other social relations such as age. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the possible ways in which class intertwines with other social categories, producing potentially unique effects.

3.4 Intersection of Gender, Ethnicity and Class

Based on the examination above, a shift appears to be necessary in the ways gendered identities are understood in relation to ethnic as well as class categories. Many feminist scholars have come to realise that the intersection of different social categories is impossible to separate out as they are inextricably interwoven. However, the early feminist approaches tended to view different social categories as additive in lieu of interacting together and producing qualitatively different effects, which was seen as unsatisfactory (Hill-Collins 1990; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). Thus, a number of academics have argued that it is imperative to create a new theoretical framework that can best deal with interlaced relations of various systems of inequality (Andersen and Hill-Collins 2004). In this section, the concept of ‘intersectionality’ is examined, which as I started to analyse the interview data came to form a major part of the theoretical framework for this research alongside other facets identified through various discussions in this chapter.

3.4.1 ‘Intersectionality’

The term ‘intersectionality’ refers to interlocking relations between gender and other social categories, such as ethnicity and class. Brah and Phoenix (2004: 76) conceptualised ‘intersectionality’ as ‘signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts.’ Hill-Collins (1990:

225) called this introduction of a new way of understanding female oppression a paradigm shift, which sees gender, ethnicity and class as 'interlocking systems of oppression' (see also hooks 1991). According to Hill-Collins, the new approach shifts the focus of analysis from simply describing similarities and differences to the ways in which they interact with each other. In a similar vein, Andersen and Hill-Collins (2004) pointed out the potential danger in depending on the ideas about difference in divergent forms of inequality because it can encourage additive ways of thinking which mechanically add other social categories to gender. Andersen and Hill-Collins stated that such a way of thinking fosters hierarchical views about inequality, placing those who are cumulatively privileged at the top and those who are additively underprivileged at the bottom; yet, this approach overlooks the structural links between them, and the complicated configurations of social categories that structure every individual life in society. Likewise, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1983: 62-63) wrote that 'race, gender, and class cannot be tagged onto each other mechanically for, as concrete social relations, they are enmeshed in each other and the particular intersections involved produce specific effects.' Andersen and Hill-Collins (2004), thus, asserted that 'thinking relationally' is vital in understanding the experience of any social group within a contextual framework.

In 'Mapping the Margins', Crenshaw (1995) also aimed to underline the significance of the complex, dynamic and fluid characteristics of identity, constitutive of multiple facets. In this essay Crenshaw emphasised the salience of recognising the interconnection of various forms of domination, such as sexism and racism, by using the examples of violence against ethnic minority women. Since ethnic minority women do not always undergo racism in manners parallel to ethnic minority men or sexism in the same ways as white females, the intersection of social relations is thought to be essential in fathoming individual women's experiences of inequality specific to their ethnic and class settings (Crenshaw 1995). Similarly, Valentine (2007) demonstrated how identity as an emergent narrative can successfully be studied by applying the notion of 'intersectionality'. Drawing on the narratives of a D/deaf female, Valentine showed the dynamic and fluid nature of identity formation, produced through the intersection of multiple forms of identity, as well as demonstrating the active participation of the individual in constructing their own biographies (see also Skinner 2011).

In chapters 5, 6 and 7 I will present evidence that indicates, while structural constraints are seen as important in shaping the identity of East Asian mothers, individual agency is also salient in the construction of their identity. In addition, I will illustrate in chapters 6 and 7 the emergent characteristics of identity that go through a constant construction and reconstruction throughout the individual biography, contingent upon individual situations and circumstances. Relating to this, the conceptualisation of West and Fenstermaker appears to be very helpful. West and Fenstermaker (1995: 8) conceptualised gender, ethnicity and class as ‘an ongoing interactional accomplishment.’ For them, these social categories are not static characteristics that individuals possess but emergent properties which are generated and regenerated in the course of interactive practices. This may help me to analyse in chapters 6 and 7 how motherhood identities of East Asian mothers are produced and reproduced through the intersection of their gender identity with their ethnicity and class position. Thus, the concept of ‘intersectionality’ seems to be an effective way of understanding and explaining the complicated process of identity formation, offering an efficacious way of capturing the simultaneous interplay of multiple identities for East Asian mothers living in England.

3.5 Conclusion: the Theoretical Framework for the Research

This chapter has provided an overview of the literature on the ways in which individuals construct their identities and on varied social factors which interact to produce unique individual identity as well as a shared sense of identity. As I developed my coding and analysis of the data, this literature and the interview data itself were used to build a theoretical framework that is best suited in researching the motherhood identity of first generation East Asian women in England. It has become clear through the investigation of existing literature and the analysis of my data that a simplistic approach cannot adequately explain the complex process of identity formation of East Asian mothers, and thus a more encompassing and flexible device is necessary. As a result, the analytical framework for this study takes a rather integrated approach that can combine different ways of understanding identity in order to offset possible setbacks and deliver a more effective means of analysing motherhood identity. Having established a sound analytical framework that can capture the dynamic characteristics of the identity construction of women with

ethnic minority heritage, we now turn to the next chapter, which presents the research methodology adopted in this study.

Chapter 4. Female-Centred Research Practice

Chapter 3 presented the theoretical framework by examining a number of theories regarding identity and the disadvantaged position of women and ethnic minorities. In line with this theoretical framework, the research practice of this study is concerned with providing East Asian women in England with an opportunity for their long silenced voices to be heard. Grounded in this stance, this chapter presents the methodological aspects of the research, starting with the examination of the ontological and epistemological stance of the study, which will lead to the subsequent section on the female-centred research practice of the data collection. Under the umbrella of this female-centred research implementation, methodological issues relating to feminist approaches are discussed whilst life history interviews are presented as the most adequate data collection technique for this project. Then, the chapter briefly outlines the demographic information about the participants of this study. In this outline, the category of East Asians is defined, in conjunction with the justifications for choosing the first generation and for selecting women with children of primary school age or under. Next it discusses the process of selecting research participants, which uses the direct face-to-face approach as a main method. Then, it presents the interview process, followed by data analysis employed in this study. The following section explores and addresses ethical considerations for this research. Finally, the last section devotes its space to my reflections on the research practice and issues arising from it.

4.1 The Ontological and Epistemological Stance

Benton and Craib (2001: 4-5) delineated that ‘ontology’ in the social sciences refers to the question of what kinds of things are there in the social world. According to Benton and Craib (*ibid.*), one of the key debates over ‘ontology’ in the social sciences is concerned with the question of whether society itself is an independent entity, apart from social actors, above and beyond. Meanwhile, Snape and Spencer (2003: 13) explained that ‘epistemology’ deals with ‘ways of knowing and learning about the social world and focuses on questions such as: how can we know about reality and what is the basis of our knowledge?’

Drawing from the above, the ontological stance I have taken in this study is that motherhood identity is not a fixed entity before social interaction but rather as constructed in interaction (see also Byrne 2006). From this perspective there is no single 'truth' about the experiences of motherhood, which can be identified independently of individual actors. This perspective developed from the vast amount of existing studies of motherhood discussed in chapters 2 and 3 that indicate the experiences and constitution of motherhood identity are not uniform but rather divergent and multifarious (e.g. Jarvis 1999; Kim 2005; Haynes 2008); in tandem with my analysis of the interview data presented in chapters 6 and 7. In this sense, the dialectical relations between the individual and society are of paramount importance (Baxter and Montgomery 1996): it is not only about how existing beliefs and norms and structural forces affect the constitution of identity; but also it is concerned with how individuals are proactively involved in their identity construction through the interpretation of their circumstances and situations. At the same time, in the previous chapter the literature suggested that an individual woman's experiences of motherhood should be understood contextually. For example, not all white mothers share the same experiences owing to their varied class positions and life experiences; or, women sharing a similar class situation do not necessarily have the same experiences of motherhood, for instance, due to ethnic differences. Hence, it is important to recognise and study social relations and organisations, such as class and ethnicity, in association with motherhood identity, because gender itself is not sufficient to draw a full picture of the complexity of motherhood identity for East Asian women living in England. In chapters 6 and 7 I will demonstrate this based on the analysis of my interview data. It is also crucial to realise that these social relations are highly political since they are formed through the practices of exclusion and inclusion that privilege some groups while exploiting others (Connell 2005). Therefore, this research takes a political stance, which prioritises the interests of a socially disadvantaged group, i.e. ethnic minority females situated in England, and seeks to generate a knowledge that can make a positive contribution to the existing social structure by employing a theoretical framework and research practice that are female-centred.

4.2 Feminist Approaches: Female-Centred Research Practice

Feminist research is primarily concerned with investigating the social conditions of women in a gender segregated society, in which women have been ignored and silenced (Stanley and Wise 1983). Placing emphasis on the everyday experiences of women (Harding 1987), feminist research aims to empower women and give them an opportunity to speak about social life from their own perspectives. Although there is no clear consensus as to the definitive meaning of and what constitutes feminist research (Maynard and Purvis 1994), feminist approaches are distinguished from other forms of social investigation in that they are framed by ‘feminist consciousness’ which seeks to illuminate the unequal position of women in sexist society while aiming to produce knowledge that can bring changes in hierarchical social relations based on gender (Stanley and Wise 1983; Devault 1990; Ramazanoglu 2002). ‘Feminist consciousness’ can be defined as a genuine awareness and understanding of the experiences of being a woman in a gender divided society, which is entrenched in ‘the concrete, practical and everyday experiences of being, and being treated as a woman’ (Stanley and Wise 1983: 32). Consonant with this, Skinner et al. (2005) maintained that, although there is no single unified feminist theory and method, there are commonly identifiable characteristics and principles of feminist research. In a similar vein, Kelly (1988: 6) claimed that what makes feminist research distinctive is ‘the questions we have asked, the way we locate ourselves within our questions, and the purpose of our work.’ Also, some feminist research practice seeks to reduce the distance between the researcher and the researched (e.g. Oakley 1981). This transformative approach challenges the traditional position of the researcher as having an objective stance throughout the conduct of the research while stressing the involvement of the participant in the research process (Sarantakos 2005). According to Patai (1987), feminist research, with a shift of focus that helps us to reassess the work of men and our very notions of knowledge, must bring women back to the centre of human stories. In order to achieve this, Harvey (1990) suggested that feminist perspectives should employ research methods that are neither unidirectional nor grounded in a hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the researched.

4.2.1 Methods of Data Collection

As Skinner et al. (2005) suggested, both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used for feminist research as long as they are suitable for purpose. However, since I aim to investigate how identities are produced *discursively* and through *narratives*, quantitative methods are not appropriate for this project. Thus, I mainly focus on qualitative approaches in this section. There are a number of different qualitative research procedures that fit well into female-centred research practices, such as focus group and in-depth interviews. For example, Wilkinson (1999) and Madriz (2000) found focus group interviews effective in reducing unequal power relations between the researcher and the participant, empowering the researched through collective interaction while allowing the voices of marginalised groups to emerge. The advantages of focus groups indicated in this research encouraged me to pilot this method in a previous project (Lim 2008a). It seemed to reduce the power disparity between the researcher and the participant because during the focus group the participants were encouraged to lead the discussion whilst the researcher played the role of facilitator with minimal interruption. In addition, it contributed to the production of rich data on working mothers' experiences, which emerged from dynamic interaction between participants. However, the piloting also made me realise there were a number of setbacks in conducting focus groups. First, as Bryman (2001) pointed out, the focus group is difficult to organise because it has to take place at a particular time suitable for different individuals with varied commitments and routines. In particular, organising group interviews with employed women with dependent children is even more likely to pose a great challenge in practice due to the time limits they have. In addition, the major disadvantage of the focus group discussion is that it is not the best approach for exploring the life stories of individuals. Moreover, it has its limitations in regard to creating an environment in which the participant can unveil their sensitive and private stories. In this respect, Rapley (2004) indicated that the individual in-depth interview technique is better suited for disclosing the subjective experiences of the individual. Furthermore, in-depth interviews can help to establish a high level of rapport between interviewer and interviewee, as well as giving an opportunity to encourage a non-hierarchical relationship between them (Nielsen 1990). Drawing on my experience of the focus group and the literature, I piloted semi-structured in-depth interviews in a subsequent research project, which explored the subjective experiences of East Asian mothers in Britain (Lim 2008b).

The in-depth interview method I employed in that project enabled me to gather more sensitive and subjective stories of individual women than the focus group. However, despite this strength, I came to realise that an in-depth interview technique was not sufficient in understanding the processes through which the individual constructed identity.

After the pilot phase, it seemed to me that because of complex and shifting characteristics, the identity formation of individual East Asian women might be more effectively understood from a more complete life history picture rather than from numerous questions that are designed to induce specific areas of the researcher's interests. This led me to start to explore the literature on life history interviews for the PhD, and subsequently pilot the method for my current research project, prior to the main data collection in order to find out how effective the technique was. Both the plethora of literature on life history interviews that I examined and the piloting seemed to suggest that the life history method could be one of the most efficacious techniques for collecting data for this study.

4.2.2 Life History Interviews

The life history interview has been considered as particularly suitable for a feminist research practice which strives to bring the subjective experiences of women to the centre by providing a critical medium for women to explore their experiences in their own terms (Harding 1987). Anderson and Jack (1991) suggested that by encouraging women to talk freely and flexibly, life history interviews can unfold their perspectives. In this respect, life history interviews are considered as an 'emancipatory' instrument that empowers women whose voice has been unheard (Bornat 2004). On the basis of this, it has widely been used among feminist researchers (for example, Ginsburg, 1989; Gluck and Patai, 1991; Valentine, 2007). Whilst the life history interview seeks to give power to women by allowing them to talk freely, the role of the interviewer is also seen as significant in the interview process because the interviewer is not regarded as an objective observer (Lim 2011). Instead, the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee is viewed as important in the construction of the interviewee's narratives (Yow 1994). In the life history interview setting the narrator has an eager listener who believes her version of the story is important and valuable. This validation, Yow (ibid.) pointed out, is particularly significant for people who have been devalued in society, such as ethnic minority women. In the

process of telling their life stories, describing events that happened and responding to questions the interviewer asks, narrators articulate stories they may not be consciously thinking of before. This process helps the narrator to get a perspective, which she may not have had previously (Atkinson 1998). The questions the interviewer asks also direct interviewees to look at their experiences from a different angle as well as allowing them to be more reflective on their experiences than they would have done in their usual situations (Oakley 1981).

Long (1987: 5) proposed that it is vital to use first-person accounts, such as life history interviews, in order to fathom the subjectivity of the individual belonging to a particular social group that has been 'muted, excised from history, and invisible in the official records of their culture.' It enables the interviewer to observe the world of the interviewee and 'a process by which the narrator constructs a self or an identity' (Yow 1994: 173). Analogous with this, Chamberlayne et al. (2000) maintained that in order to understand an individual more fully we need to know his/her life history and the processes in which he/she becomes what he/she is. As stated in the theory chapter, this study will be drawing on the work of West and Fenstermaker (1995) to understand identity as an emergent narrative that goes through transformation throughout the individual life. While certain elements of identity might be more stable than others, it is important to recognise that an individual's identity changes over time in line with the way in which an individual interprets what has happened to him/her and presents it to others as their life history. Also, Valentine (2007) proposed that the identity of the individual is a result of a complex, multifarious and dynamic interaction between different social organisations and relations that deeply shape the daily experiences of the individual. Bertaux (1982) suggested that the life history interview can, therefore, disclose the processes through which identity is produced as a result of the intersection of gender with other aspects of identity, such as ethnicity and class. In addition, Chamberlayne et al. (2000) pointed out that the individual makes their own history under the social conditions which they do not always get to choose. Hence, it is important to understand these conditions in which individual lives have been shaped and affected. According to the Personal Narratives Group (1989: 5), women's personal accounts are vital in examining 'the interaction between the individual and society in the construction of gender'. In a similar vein, Connell (2005), drawing on her life history interviews with four groups of Australian men, affirmed that life histories offer rich data not only on personal

accounts but also on social structural aspects. In this way life history interviews are thought to provide ‘considerable background and social texture to research’ (Berg 2007: 277).

However, the life history interview is not without its criticisms and drawbacks. Yow (1994) suggested that since the life history interview is interested in the subjective experiences of the participant, the data collected through the life history method cannot be representative. Although it may produce information on the bigger picture of social structures, the findings of the life history interview cannot be generalised as they are specific to the individual experience. Hence, the representation of the findings should be seen as *illustrative*, rather than generalising. This links to Yin’s (2009) criticism of some scholars who try to judge the generalisability of a small scale qualitative study based on ‘statistical generalisation’. According to Yin, ‘statistical generalisation’ applies to the case of large scale survey research which aims to obtain generalisable data drawing from a large and representative sample. Yin (*ibid.*) went on to advocate that such generalisation should not be applied to small scale qualitative studies because they are designed to achieve different goals from large survey research, illuminating the experiences of a particular population.

Some scholars have also highlighted the potential danger of the uncritical employment of personal narratives and biographies in examining social issues (for example, Atkinson and Silverman 1997). Whilst the life history approach aims to cover ‘the whole life’, inexorably it is not feasible to investigate the entirety of an individual biography. Any life history method therefore accompanies inevitable ‘omissions and silences as well as the selectivities necessarily involved in reducing the vast amount of data’ (Stanley and Morgan 1993: 3). In similar fashion, Gardner (2001: 192) pointed out the impossibility of life history approaches in offering a complete and accurate picture of events, given that memories are likely to wane over time as a consequence of ‘neurological and psychological processes’. Such dependence on memory and its partial and articulated characteristics raise questions regarding the validity of the life history data. Because the biographical accounts of the story teller are based on recollection, it is highly likely that they are the outcomes of her articulation of events, rather than ‘facts’ (Bruner 1987).

On the other hand, Stanley and Morgan (1993: 3), whilst proposing the intertextual

relationship between the representation of reality and reality itself, affirmed that rejecting 'conventional referential claims' does not require us to deny that:

There is any significant relationship between 'the life' as it was lived and 'the life' as it has been written. Rather, it directs us to accept the manifold complexities of the relationship as crucial analytical material.

In this, what Stanley and Morgan suggest is that while there are interlinked relationships between life as it has been told and life itself, the written (or indeed spoken) form of life does not need to be a factual representation because it is based on the subjective interpretations of the teller.

Additionally, Atkinson (1998: 134) suggested that:

The way an individual recounts a personal narrative at any point in his or her life represents the most internally consistent interpretation of the way that person currently understands the past, the experienced present, and the anticipated future.

Thus, the emphasis is not on the factual reliability and accuracy of the individual's accounts but on the way in which the teller arranges their narratives in a particular manner in order to tell their life story, because it discloses the teller's relationship to their own biography (Portelli 1981). Hence, the significance of biographical accounts cannot be found in its adherence to facts (Portelli *ibid.*).

Based on the above and the piloting of other research tools discussed in the previous section, it seems evident that life history interviews can be one of the best tools to capture the complex process of identity formation for East Asian mothers residing in England, whilst helping me to obtain information on the social conditions where their lives have been shaped and influenced. This is particularly so considering that women of East Asian heritage in England have been paid scant attention in the official and academic discourse of England. As a result, it is critical to elicit information on their experiences and interpretations of their lives in England as mothers and workers by using an effective research instrument. Drawing on these, life history interviews were used as a main data

collection method for this study.

4.2.3 First Generation East Asian Mothers Residing in England

The focus of this study is first generation East Asian women with dependent children of primary school age or under, living in England. Dissimilar to second or third generation individuals who are born and raised in England, first generation migrants refer to people who have moved to and have been living in England. The main grounds for choosing first generation instead of the second or third is primarily because this research is interested in the impact of the experience of living in another country on motherhood identity formation. In this respect, second or third generations are not suitable since they did not migrate into England. For this reason, it was decided that this research should focus on first generation East Asian women with dependent children.

Geographically, East Asian countries include China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, South and North Korea. The cultural influence of Confucianism has been strong among these countries where China had a significant political and cultural domination in the past (see chapters 1 and 3). However, with regard to North Korea, I decided to exclude it from the study despite its close geographical proximity as well as political allegiance to China: primarily because of the practical challenges of finding North Korean migrants in England as the regime does not allow North Koreans to move out of their country; secondly, due to its extremely unique social, economic and political history, North Korea can be an interesting research topic on its own, rather than being blended with other East Asian countries, most of which have been active in accepting Western capitalist ideology, unlike North Korea. With regard to the Chinese group, I initially intended to include women from Taiwan alongside those from Hong Kong and China. However, it did not transpire in the actual selection process because I was not able to find any women from Taiwan. Thus, East Asians in my sample refer to Chinese (including women from Hong Kong), Japanese and South Korean.

All the participants had at least one child under the age of 11. The major ground for setting this criterion is because children under 11 are highly likely to be dependent and thus require a substantial amount of time and care. Although children of school age may be

more independent than those of pre-school age in terms of the actual care required, they are still likely to be dependent upon their parents or carers (for instance, most will be picked up from school at certain times). Thus, women with children under the age of 11 are likely to experience more time constraints than those whose children have already reached secondary school age or over, especially if they have to combine their childcare with paid employment. Some women also had (an) older child(ren), alongside their younger one. For instance, five mothers in my sample had children aged over 11, ranging from, 11 to 16 years old, along with their younger child under the age of 11. Five women had one child; 21 had two; and four had over three children. Eight mothers gave birth to and raised their primary school age child(ren) in their country of origin until they migrated while 22 mothers gave birth to and raised them in England.

In terms of the length of their stay in England, a wide range of experiences were collected, which included varied duration of settlement in England. The main reason for this was that I wanted to examine whether the time those individual women spent in England had any impact on their understanding of gender relations and motherhood ideology. The length of their stay in England ranged from five months to 20 years: with six women less than five years; nine between five and nine years; 11 between ten and 15 years; and four between 16 and 20 years. All of the participants came to Britain when they were adults, except one who came from Japan when she was a teenager in order to go to school in Britain. All women were married and lived with their husbands, except two who came to England to study with their children while their husbands stayed in their country of origin for work reasons. Eleven participants were married to men of British origin; eight Chinese; nine South Korean; and two Japanese. Eight women came from mainland China; two from Hong Kong; ten from Japan and ten from South Korea. Two was in their 20s; 14 were in their 30s; and 14 were in their 40s. Thirteen informants stated the reasons for coming to England as to study; 14 reported to have migrated in order to accompany their husbands or boyfriends; two either for having a better life or for gaining wider experience in life; and one for her daughter's education.

Whilst I endeavoured to include a variety different class backgrounds and educational attainment, they were relatively homogeneous, comprising mostly women from a middle-class background with relatively high educational achievement. The highest educational

qualifications my participants obtained were: two had PhDs; eight Master's; 15 Bachelor's degrees; three diplomas; and two A level equivalent. Fifteen of them were employed (eight full-time and seven part-time) while the other 15 were full-time stay-home mothers. Six of the employed mothers were involved in professional and managerial occupations (e.g. medical researcher, software developer or teaching); three were engaged in intermediate professional & administrative work (e.g. dietician, personal assistant or administrator); two were skilled and unskilled manual workers (e.g. hairdresser or shop assistant); three women ran their own small businesses (e.g. restaurant or local newsagent's); and one was a full-time PhD student. Strictly speaking, a PhD student is not a paid employee. However, considering its demands on the actual working time, it is equivalent to full-time employment. Hence, I decided to categorise PhD research as full-time employment. In terms of annual household income, except for four out of 23 participants who provided this information, almost two thirds of them had more than the average household income in the UK (£ 24,400 p/a) (ONS 2010). This suggests the relatively privileged position of the participants. Table 4.1 presented below provides basic information of the 30 East Asian participants (for more detailed individual information see Appendix IV).

Table 4.1 Background information of the participants

In numbers of mothers (N=30)

<u>Marital status</u>		<u>Nationality of their partners</u>	
Married	30 (100%)	British	11
		Chinese	8
		Korean	9
		Japanese	2
<u>Country of origin</u>		<u>No. of children (under 18)</u>	
Mainland China	8	One	5
Hong Kong	2	Two	21
Japan	10	Over Three	4

South Korea	10		
<u>Age</u>		<u>Employment status</u>	
20s	2	Full-time employed	8
30s	14	Part-time employed	7
40s	14	Full-time stay at home	15
<u>Highest level of education</u>		<u>Type of occupation for employed mothers</u>	
A Level	2	Professional and Managerial	6
Diploma	3	Intermediate professional &	
Bachelor's degree	15	Administrative	3
Master's degree	8	Skilled & unskilled manual	2
PhD	2	Full-time PhD Student	1
		Self-employed	3
<u>Main reasons for immigration</u>		<u>Household Income p/a</u>	
Study	14	Less than £ 20,000	4
Accompany spouse	13	£ 20,000-30,000	4
Better life/gaining wider experience	2	£ 30,000-40,000	3
Daughter's education	1	£ 40,000-50,000	2
<u>Number of years living in Britain</u>		£ 50,000-60,000	5
Less than 5 years	6	£ 60,000-70,000	1
Between 5 and 9 years	9	£ 70,000-80,000	1
Between 10 and 15 years	11		
Between 16 and 20 years	4		

	Over £ 80,000	3
	N/A	7

4.2.4 Finding the participants

From my pilot research (Lim 2008b) I was aware that identifying and gaining access to East Asian women with dependent children would be a great challenge. Initially I considered using a more systematic sampling method based on the census data and researched the possibility. However, soon I realised that it would be extremely difficult to achieve this, given that the only East Asian population recognised in the census is Chinese. Also, the examination of existing studies on ethnic minority individuals indicated that such studies tend to use non-systematic approaches, such as snowballing (see Sun 2008). In addition, the fact that East Asians constitute a small group in England posed initial difficulties with the sampling. On top of this, the narrower category of the subject, focusing on first generation East Asian women with at least one dependent child under 11, meant that the chances of finding the right people became even smaller. Hence, a number of strategies were employed in order to overcome these setbacks. In the previous research project on the same ethnic group I tried out visiting nurseries and various local organisations which ran play groups, including Sure Start, with flyers outlining my project and contact details. However, I encountered a few problems with this approach. Firstly, there are a limited number of nurseries or play groups who had children of East Asian mothers. Secondly, even if they had, they only allowed me to leave my flyers in the hands of the staff or their noticeboards, in order to protect the confidentiality of their customers, thus preventing me from having any direct contact with potential participants. This experience seemed to indicate that the above methods were not effective, as it seemed to create a passive distance that could easily be ignored and yielded very little response. I therefore decided to adopt the face-to-face method by directly approaching potential participants. In order to do this, the first step was to identify locations where a high number of East Asian mothers were likely to be found. After researching through the Internet as well as talking to various people, a number of East Asian communities (e.g. Korean, Japanese, or Chinese) around South England were identified, including areas in London.

The information I gathered indicated that there were Japanese and Korean communities in London or on the outskirts of London, mainly as a result of the families of expatriates who were sent to work for the branches of their companies located in London. With regard to the Chinese community, Southampton where I have been living has a large Chinese population. Thus, collecting Chinese participants from Southampton seemed to be a sensible idea, especially considering that it could save temporal and financial resources by getting access to the existing community in my local area, which I could approach easily without long distance travel. Once I had established where key groups could be located, I decided to focus on one group at a time, starting with mothers with the Korean heritage, followed by Japanese and Chinese.

For Korean participants I visited New Malden in Surrey, where there was a large South Korean community. I visited various places in New Malden, including hairdressers' and cafes, where many Korean mothers were likely to go, with leaflets briefly outlining my research project as well as contact details. Although I managed to succeed in finding two willing participants through this method, this proved to be not the most effective way to get ten participants as most of the women did not want to be interrupted by a stranger in the middle of their hair being done or talking to friends. In addition, I also visited play groups yet without much success because not many Korean mothers seemed to use the facilities I visited. (In fact, there were other play groups many Korean mothers used, which I did not know at that time). Thus, I changed my focus onto private pre-/after-school institutions where mothers would come to pick up their children when they finish their lessons. Among a few, one institution was particularly supportive and helpful by allowing me to talk to mothers who were waiting for their children in the reception area. Although it was a tiring and painful process with frequent long waits and many rejections, talking to mothers in this institution turned out to be most effectual. Thus, I visited this place a number of times until I felt that I had found enough mothers, as well as asking those who had already agreed to participate in the project to introduce their friends or associates.

For the purposeful selection of a Japanese group I visited a Japanese school in London, which was comprised of a majority of Japanese expatriates' children. Although I was able to meet many Japanese mothers in front of the school near the pickup time, I soon realised that most of the mothers I talked to did not have a good command of English despite their

long settlement in Britain. Hence, after travelling long hours to get to the school, I had to be content with finding one participant with competent spoken English skills, who was not an expatriate's wife. Fortunately though, she introduced me to one of her friends after her interview. From then on, the majority of Japanese participants were collected via snowballing. As Burton (2003) pointed out in her study of Japanese women living in England, personal connections seemed to be significant in Japanese social transactions as each interviewee acted as a mediator.

The final focus of my sampling was the Chinese group. Getting access to this group of women was, however, the hardest of all. The local area where I lived had a big Chinese community, running a wide array of events and organisations for Chinese immigrants, including a Chinese New Year ceremony in the city centre and Saturday Chinese school. On the day when the Chinese New Year ceremony was held I went to the city centre with my leaflets. Around the civic centre where the ceremony was held, there was a large crowd, including many Chinese families. I began to initiate conversations with some women with young children, asking whether they were Chinese and how they were enjoying the ceremony. Possibly due to my similar appearance to them (I am a first generation immigrant from South Korea), they seemed to feel at ease with me even if we had never met before. Through this process I managed to find two Chinese mothers who were happy to participate in my study. However, this was not enough. Thus, similar to the other two groups, I also decided to visit the Saturday school where mothers brought their children for various Chinese culture related lessons, such as Chinese language and Chinese traditional dance classes. However, despite a clear explanation and showing a letter from my department, some teachers and mothers in that school were rather suspicious of my research, unlike responses I received from Korean and Japanese groups. While I was well aware of any potential wariness or suspicion from people being approached by a stranger, I did not prepare for that sort of response especially after completing data collection with the other groups with no such reactions. After being rejected from the school on my first attempt, I contacted the chairwoman of the Chinese Association in my local area and asked for her help. With her support I regained the access to mothers in the school, which clearly helped in finding some participants. Like the other two groups, this technique was also combined with the snowballing method by expanding contacts through the introduction of existing participants or already established acquaintances, which eventually enabled me to

find ten first generation Chinese mothers.

These direct approaches were relatively expensive and tiring as they involved me travelling back and forth to these locations until I found satisfactory numbers of participants. Nevertheless, it proved to be one of the best ways of getting access to these groups. Through the stage by stage approach, 30 East Asian women agreed to participate in my research. Whilst 30 interviews cannot provide generalisable information on East Asian mothers in England, they are substantial enough to present an illustrative picture of the identity formation of these women. The life history method is one of the richest and most time-consuming techniques (Connell 2005). This means that it is extremely difficult to achieve both depth and breadth, which requires a trade-off between the two. Hence, 30 interviews provided ample data through which the motherhood identity of East Asian women was examined in depth.

4.2.5 The Interview

Interviews were conducted group by group, starting with mothers of Korean origin. I found this approach was more practical and easier for me because each East Asian community tended to be separate, rather than concentrated in the same local area. Interviews were carried out in various places, such as cafes, participants' homes or workplace, or the researcher's home, whichever the participant preferred. Interviews took from 1 hour 40 minutes to 2 hour 50 minutes. Life history interviews can take longer than this (Atkinson 1998). Many researchers who conduct the life history method also return to the interviewees to check information and interpretation (Skinner forthcoming). Whilst this would have been preferable, this is normally the case for a smaller sample (e.g. Skinner forthcoming) or where a project has more researchers involved over a longer period and/or more financial resources (e.g. Atkinson 1998; Frost et al. 2007). The interviews began by briefly reminding the interviewees about my research project and the main areas I was interested in, such as the experiences of motherhood, employment and migration. Then, I asked the participants to tell me their life stories up until the present time in whichever way they wanted to. As much as possible I let them talk and just listened attentively without interruption until they finished their stories. This allowed interviewees to determine the structure and content of their stories in their own words, rather than being directed by the

interviewer. After this, a number of probing questions were asked in order to explore themes that were not covered by the interviewees or that I wanted them to develop further. In order to obtain general background information, such as age, educational qualifications and household income, the participants were also asked to fill in a brief questionnaire at the end of the interview (see Appendix III for more detail). Whilst some researchers (e.g. see Skinner forthcoming) did not find it problematic to ask the participants to fill in the questionnaire before the interview via such a medium as email, for me it seemed more appropriate to ask them to provide their personal information after building a rapport. Particularly considering that the interviewer and the interviewee hardly knew each other, I was very careful to avoid any potential obstacles, which could prevent the smooth process of the interview.

The information gathered through the questionnaire – e.g. the length of settlement in England and household income - was used for the data analysis as yardsticks to discuss their impact on the lives of East Asian mothers in my sample. At the end of the interviews I gave each participant a small gift as a gesture of thanking them for their time and support. It is though noteworthy to stress that the participants were not aware of receiving any gift until the end of the interview because they were not informed about it before in case it could affect their decision to participate in the interview voluntarily.

4.2.6 Data Analysis

The data collected through life history interviews were analysed using two main methods: discourse and narrative analyses. The rationale behind combining two different analyses lies in my attempt to employ a cross-data approach in conjunction with narrative analysis that can simultaneously highlight individual life stories, as discussed in the theory chapter, whilst at the same time providing an overview of common themes and use of ideology and discourse. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. In order to preserve original meanings and nuances, Korean interviews were transcribed in Korean and only selective extracts of the Korean interview data were translated *after* being analysed. Translating interview data into another language might bring changes in subtle meanings as the exact vocabularies are not always available for different languages (Kim 2005; Wu 2007). Worse, carrying out translation before the data analysis can exacerbate this as it

involves double interpretation of the translator/researcher through translation and analysis. Bearing this in mind I tried my hardest to retain the original meaning and structure of the Korean interview data as much as it was possible. The transcribing process took a number of different stages, beginning with the first transcription, which involved the draft of the entire interview that included words and other striking features, such as laughing and long pauses. Then the whole interviews were re-listened and re-transcribed for detailed analysis, which included non-lexical expressions as well as my talk. In both transcriptions non-verbal components of talk, such as pauses and hesitations, were treated as important parts of the data. In order to demonstrate that interview data is the product of co-creation between the interviewer and the interviewee, the excerpts used in subsequent chapters also included my 'talk' (for example, either as 'Int' or 'I') as well as the interviewee's 'talk' - non-lexical utterances (such as um and uh-huh), and discourse markers and fillers (e.g. you know) were preserved alongside hesitations and repetitions. Less than three second pauses were presented as (p) and longer than three second as (P). A dash indicates omitted words or parts of words. Words that I cannot hear clearly are indicated as [*unclear*]. Omitted lines are displayed using dots (e.g. '...'). Loud voice is indicated by using capital letters. In order to maintain anonymity, certain details of the participants, such as names and ages, as well as their children's names have been changed.

The analysis of the data was carried out in a dialectical manner, developed through the use of the literature, my theoretical development and the interview data (Skinner 2005). Thus, the interview text was examined in connection with existing academic work: for instance, the sensitivity of stay-home men as a result of continuing gender norms in chapter 5 can be understood in relation to the findings of Connell (1987); also, when home-stay mothers talked about the devalued social status of housewives and domestic work in chapter 6, my analysis of the data was drawn from much existing feminist research, such as Lewis (1991) and Crittenden (2001), as reference. At the same time, my theoretical position also played an important part in analysing my data, such as looking at the intersection of various social factors and its impact on identity formation. Concurrently, my interview data enabled me to critically evaluate existing literature, looking for gaps.

4.2.6.1 Discourse Analysis

There is a wide array of different types of discourse analysis, such as conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis. Among many this study mainly employed the discourse analysis developed especially by Potter and Wetherell (1987) although their method was adopted as a broad framework, rather than as an orthodox instruction. ‘Discourse’ in this denotes a medium that transmits dominant ideology, which is used by individuals to ‘construct versions of the social world’ (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 33). In this sense, analysing discourse allows me to explore how dominant forms of ideology affect individual mothers’ experiences as well as how individual women deploy particular forms of discourse in order to construct and present their understandings of motherhood and gender relations. Discourse analysis is principally interested in language in use. This is based in the understanding that talk is ‘constitutive of the realities within which we live, rather than expressive of an earlier, discourse-independent reality’ (Sampson 1993: 1221). Scholars interested in discourse analysis see language as a ‘medium for action’ through which a variety of activities are performed, rather than merely describing things (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Edwards and Potter 1992). From this perspective, language is seen as a cultural practice within which varied versions of reality are constituted (Sampson 1993). Consequently, discourse analysis is concerned with interviewees’ constructions and the ways in which they are accomplished, together with interviewees’ conscious and unconscious use of competing discourses and ideologies (Potter 1996). Individuals use language in an active manner by including some accounts and excluding others in order to construct their versions of the social world. This discursive approach thus seeks to examine how identities are constituted by using a particular discourse (Edley 2001). In this discursive approach, the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee is seen as significant because the interviewer’s talk is considered to contribute to the construction of the versions as much as the interviewee’s (Potter and Whetherell 1995). Thus, as I suggested previously, viewing the interviewer as having a neutral and objective position is highly problematic in discourse analysis.

The interview data was initially coded using NVivo 8. This process helped in organising a huge amount of data into ‘manageable chunks’ (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Through this process the data was organised based on themes, identifying main and sub-themes. Once

this was done, I read the categorically organised parts of transcripts a number of times, searching for patterns. Out of this close examination, I identified differences (e.g. discourse of home-stay mothers and that of working mothers in chapters 6 and 7) as well as similarities (e.g. what commonalities the discourse of mothers in a similar employment status shared). Once this was done, I read and re-read the transcripts under the same patterns, and developed a set of broad, preliminary categories that I then noted in the margins. Out of this process, I started to piece together other important notions in analysing the data, which had not been considered as part of the original coding, such as the impact of not working on mothers. I then returned to the transcripts I had coded previously and recoded them by applying these new themes. This process was repeated until the coding categories were applied to and examined for every interview. The next step was to investigate each broad analytic category more closely, to identify deeper meanings and significance for individual women within the category. This involved the detailed examination of each extract line by line, in conjunction with re-listening to the original interview record. As I systematically proceeded through the interviews using each category, I also drew up tables enumerating the frequency that women mentioned a topic and then took apart these summations to see how individual people and subgroups in the sample talked about the topic (for example, women whose husbands were of East Asian origin vs women whose husbands were of British origin in chapter 5). It became clear that respondents commonly developed accounts to explain certain behaviours, for example their division of housework, in the light of dominant ideology around the gender division of labour in the home. Out of this lengthy process of analysis I developed the set of ideas that form the basis for chapter 5, and parts of chapters 6 and 7. In selecting interview excerpts to exemplify each topic in the chapter, I tried to represent the variability and range of expression in each category.

The above approach of conducting the cross data analysis through discourse analysis was immensely useful in identifying discursive themes and their impact on identity. This was especially the case, given that the topic I investigate was little researched, because it provided an overview of the issue and the importance of the themes identified. In addition, it offered the backdrop that I could explore further using narrative analysis to gain the depth needed for detailed discussions of identity and identity formation. Whilst discourse analysis functioned as an extremely instrumental tool, it was, however, not always

sufficient since the method inevitably entailed fragmenting the interview data into thematic chunks. On the basis of this, it seemed necessary to employ another analytical tool that could allow me to examine detailed information about an individual woman's life that is represented in their own words. Such a technique could enable me to explore their representation of their life as a whole and help me to explain the way they represent themselves on the theme in question. As discussed previously, the life history interview gave the interviewees space to talk about their lives and what they perceived as important in their own words using their own structure rather than a more imposed structure as would be the case in a semi-structured interview. During the life history interviews the participants often told their experiences as long stories and used storytelling as an important means of reconstructing their lives as well as creating their identity. Thus, I was keen to preserve these stories and represent them in a more respectful way by combining narrative analysis. On top of this, the advantage of narrative analysis is that it enabled me to provide a more detailed account that illustrates the complex identity formation of the individuals. I believe this has strengthened the research in combination with the cross data analysis approach of discourse analysis.

4.2.6.2 Narrative Analysis

Dissimilar to the discourse analysis presented above, which focused on searching for similar or different patterns across the data, for narrative analysis I concentrated on the examination of the narrative flow of the individual biography and how their identity was said to evolve over the years. Amongst a variety of existing narrative approaches, I mainly adopted the narrative analysis of Riessman (1990) albeit I did not follow her method in an exhaustive manner, together with Ginsburg's (1989) approach. The former helped me in conducting detailed data analysis, especially in the thorough reading of each line. In addition, her approach was useful in understanding the importance of interaction between the teller and the listener and how stories emerge through such interplay. Along with Riessman's technique, Ginsburg's approach was instrumental in analysing narratives based on the course of life. By arranging tellers' stories according to this, Ginsburg (1989) effectively illustrated how an individual interviewee became who they were. Findings from this approach constitute the first parts of chapters 6 and 7.

Drawing from the two main themes identified through discourse analysis – i.e. discourse of stay-home mothers and employed mothers, I decided to select two interviews in relation to each theme. Thus, the first phase of my narrative analysis involved reading individual transcripts and field notes, then indexing and summarising each interview as a case study. Out of this process I selected two individual interview transcripts linking to each theme. Each case study was examined on the basis of two main concepts: (a) the narrative sequence of their life stories; and (b) a detailed analysis, using notions of motherhood ideology and gender relations, together with other various factors, such as their stated main reasons for coming to England and the duration of settlement in England. According to Maynes et al. (2008: 35), *temporality* is a salient element in narrative analysis because it ‘allows for the possibility of understanding agency and its motivations as it operates and changes *through time*’ [my emphasis]. Also, Polkinghorne (1995: 15) wrote that ‘narrative analysis is the procedure through which the researcher organises the data elements into a coherent developmental account.’ In this, what he suggests is that people’s accounts are not coherent and it is therefore the researcher’s job to organise these coherently to make better sense for the reader. Thus, the next step involved categorising each transcript using the time frame – e.g. from before their migration and motherhood to the present – configuring the descriptions of events and happenings into a coherent story (Polkinghorne 1995). This process helped me to examine how their life stories changed or remained *unchanged* in different temporal and spatial settings, as well as enabling me to make comparisons based on their employment status.

This was followed by the detailed analysis of each excerpt line by line, along with re-listening to the original interview record repeatedly in order to find any nuances and subtleties in their tones, using the concepts of motherhood ideology and gender relations. Through this process, I was able to explore the importance given in their stories to the national and/or ethnic cultural heritages of individual women, which emerged as a crucial aspect, having a direct impact on their experiences in England. After I completed this process of examining each case study, I then compared the narratives of home-stay mothers with those of employed mothers. From this my analysis indicates that the home-stay mothers and working mothers I interviewed constructed their lives differently despite the persistent impact of gendered relations among almost all the mothers in my study.

Maynes et al. (2008) put emphasis on the vitality of understanding the structural context in shaping individual lives. In presenting the narrative accounts, I therefore endeavoured to formulate a bigger picture or cultural context in which I situated and interpreted individual lives. In relation to this, interviewees' excerpts are presented to the reader as evidence for my interpretations (see also Riessman 1990, 1993). Apart from this, I strived to preserve the narrator's accounts as much as I could by allocating considerable space to excerpts from the interview, which was consistent with my effort to give more space to the interviewee's voice.

However, at the same time, the findings of narrative analysis should be seen as the outcome of constructions, in lieu of an objective representation of the teller's story. The interpretation of the interview data by the researcher is therefore an essential part of any research and it is also one of the major roles of the researcher in transforming spoken words into written texts. In addition, the interviewee is often not conscious of structural influences which shape their individual and personal experiences. In this regard, the researcher should be able to provide structural explanations for individual lives within a particular society by using her knowledge and expertise (Glucksmann 1994). Relating to this, the recognition of pre-understanding (Gummesson 1991) seems vital for social researchers in generating valid data. Stenbacka (2001: 553) denoted the concept of pre-understanding as 'knowledge, insight and experience that accompanies the researcher entering the process of research.' Drawing on this, it can be suggested that my insider knowledge founded on my position as a first generation East Asian woman was highly instrumental: for instance, I had direct experience of living in a strongly gender divided society based on Confucian patriarchal norms and beliefs. This functioned as a vital tool in reading between the lines of some of the participants' personal accounts and locating individual stories within their cultural environment. In this sense, my interpretation and contribution to the findings as well as the presentation of the narrative data form a salient part of this study (Devault 1990). However, concurrently my insider position could have prevented me from recognising certain points of or making correct interpretations of what the interviewees said (Skinner 2012 forthcoming). Reflecting on my experience of previous research on the same population group (Lim 2008b), I became more conscious of this potential danger and tried to guard against it by looking for differences between me and my participants when analysing the data. Simultaneously, my outsider position as a

childless woman might also have brought different dynamics to the interaction between me and the participants. While this could be seen as a setback to some extent due to the potential distance it could create between us, the participant's awareness of discrepancy in knowledge could help to generate more detailed information because the participant, as an experienced knower of mothering, might feel the need to explain their experiences in a more detailed manner to me.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

In the process of carrying out research it is essential to think through ethical issues that may arise. This is particularly the case for conducting research on potentially vulnerable groups such as ethnic minority individuals. The position of first generation migrant women of East Asian origin living in England is likely to be vulnerable, compared to the majority of the white population, due to their limited rights and legal security, in conjunction with a possible language barrier. Therefore, it was my primary concern not to exploit their vulnerability and to offer them respect and a degree of power, which was not always guaranteed in their daily lives as ethnic minority individuals. In this regard, the interviewees were given the opportunity to talk as freely as possible about themselves and their experiences as ethnic minority mothers residing in England, without being subjected to any stereotyped bias on the basis of ethnicity, gender and class (Oral History Association 2009). I also submitted and received formal ethical approval from my departmental ethics committee and supervisor prior to starting the research.

In addition, I was very much aware of the potentially unequal power relations between researcher and participant. As the researcher I was the designer and conductor of the project and therefore had more power over the project than the respondent because I held more knowledge of the content and process, and the capacity to gain access to relevant information than the latter (Taylor 2001). I was therefore highly reflexive about my use of power in the research process (Ramazanoglu 2002) and strived to minimise any power disparity. However, at the same time, as Glucksmann (1994) claimed, part of the reflexivity of a feminist researcher should be realistic awareness about the limits of what she can achieve in the process of research. For instance, Glucksmann, drawing on her experience of researching women working on an assembly line, maintained that the cleavage between

the knowledge of the researcher and that of the researched is unavoidable. Although the interviewee was given relative autonomy to lead their own narratives, it was I as the researcher who interpreted the data and transformed spoken words into written texts. In addition, quite often the narrator does not recognise structural forces in which their daily lives are located and thus their understanding of these situations is gained through their fragmented partial routines. In this respect, it is the role of the researcher to bring formal knowledge and expertise to the process in order to provide personal as well as structural explanations for individual lives.

Feminist research methods centred on women seek to create research practice in which the female narrators can make an informed choice, in lieu of being coerced into participation. This requires a clear and honest statement about the aims and objectives of the project prior to the actual interview taking place (ESRC 2005; Oral History Association 2009). Further, it is essential to inform the participants of the stages of the research, what the researcher expects from the interviewee and any information regarding the interpretation and the publication of the research. Founded on this, I obtained written forms of informed consent from the participant prior to the biographical interview (see Appendix D). The consent form included a clear statement of the goals of the project, an agreement on the use of a digital tape recorder, their rights to refuse to answer any questions or topics that the narrators did not wish to discuss, as well as their rights to withdraw from the research at any time they wanted to (Berg 2007). On top of this, the trust the interviewees place in the researcher with the agreement to participate in my project should not be taken lightly (Patai 1987). After an interview took place, I again reassured the participants about the confidential use of the interview related materials, including the secure location where the interview record would be placed (e.g. the password protected personal computer of the researcher, of which she is the sole user) and the person who would have access to the digital record of the interviews (e.g. the interviewer and supervisor only). Also, the interviewee was made aware of the future use of the interview (for example, publication and other relevant research). Moreover, there was strong emphasis on maintaining the confidentiality of the participants by excluding any identifiable information, together with the guarantee of their anonymity by not revealing their or their children's real names and reducing any possibility of being identified by readers (Yow 1994; ESRC 2005; Oral History of Association 2009).

The ethics framework of the ESRC (2005) stressed the importance of avoiding or minimising any potential harm or risk to individuals or social groups. The researcher must therefore ensure to protect the interests and well-being of participants (ESRC 2005). In relation to this, it is important to consider that the interview may be a disturbing experience for some participants. Those who participated may feel wronged by certain aspects of the research process. This can be particularly so if they feel their private worlds have been intruded upon. Therefore, I tried, where necessary, to find ways to alleviate any distress or anxiety caused to those participating in my study (British Sociological Association 2002). It is imperative to discuss with the narrator their experience of the interview in order to identify any unforeseen negative effects or misconceptions (ESRC 2005). Drawing on this, I debriefed all the participants after each interview in order to inform them of the outcomes of the interviews, before they left the research 'setting' (British Psychological Association 2009). I also offered them external support, such as contact details of help-lines or counselling services in local areas where they resided, although none of the participants needed such service.

4.4 Reflection on the Research Method

Reflexivity is one of the most important facets of any social research (Broom et al. 2009). Thus, this section focuses on the challenges, limitations as well as strengths of the research technique employed in my study, starting from reflection on the methods used in the selection of participants. This will be followed by discussion of the issues that arose during the life history interview.

4.4.1 Reflection on the Selection of Participants

As presented above, my samples include a wide array of participants in terms of the countries mothers had their children; the age of the children; the duration of settlement in England; as well as husbands' ethnic origins. For example, whilst the majority of mothers (22) had their primary school age children in England, eight mothers had them in their country of origins. Additionally, there are issues around variance in mothers with a range of age of children: while 16 mothers had children of primary school age only, four mothers

also had older children (ranging from 11 to 16) alongside their primary school aged children. Further, the participants had lived in England for varied lengths of time, from less than a year to 20 years. Moreover, while some women got married to men of the same national origin, others got married to white British men. These diversities in my samples may raise questions for some scholars, who may argue that there are too many variables for a small group, because this is likely to make efficacious comparison and analysis impossible. Also, it might be the case that the experiences of those belonging to divergent categories are so different that research should focus on a narrowly defined group. In this respect, it is possible to argue that, for instance, mothering experiences can differ, depending on whether they have older children of secondary school age alongside their younger children or whether they just have primary school aged children. Further, having different durations of settlement in England might also have a significant impact on those women's experiences and identity formation.

However, firstly my study is not comparative research although some aspects of the findings appear to be comparative between different groups, such as Chinese and Japanese or South Korean. As an *exploratory* project I started this research with an open mind and aimed to explore unknown stories by having relatively diverse samples. This was particularly important, given that a very limited number of studies have been carried out on this group of women in England. Borrowing from Thorne (1993), my approach can be referred to as "starting with the whole", or at least attempting to, by including a relatively wide array of categories. According to Garey (1999), we should not assume that the social processes being investigated will differ along predetermined categories even though such findings may emerge from the study. Thus, the question of divergence should not be employed as a means to removing some people from the sample because they do not share certain set criteria. Within the homogeneous ethnic and gender composition as first generation East Asians, having diversity was useful to find out how such differences played out in their identity construction, offering opportunities to investigate possible differences or similarities between the divergent groups. For instance, with regard to which country these women had their primary school aged child(ren), this offered the opportunity to examine different and/or similar experiences in terms of childcare and work although the data analysis showed that it did not seem to have any major impact. Moreover, in terms of the diversity in the ethnic composition of couples, it provided an interesting and significant

insight into the gendered division of labour within the family, as will be shown in chapter 5. As a result, having a relatively diverse group, whilst the key selection criteria remaining constant, enriched my findings rather than hindered a coherent and controlled study, which could provide a springboard for more specifically defined and targeted future studies.

In the meantime, there concurrently arise questions regarding homogeneity of the samples in terms of their class background and educational achievement. Despite my effort to get access to diverse class positions, I have to admit to a very limited degree of success in this. Although there are a few participants who belong to a lower economic spectrum, considering their educational achievement and other cultural habitus (Bourdieu 1984, 1990), it is hard to categorise them as working-class. There are a number of possible reasons for not being able to gain diverse class samples. Firstly, the reason why the majority of the participants held high educational levels might be related to the immigration policy of Britain, which requires a certain level of income and occupational status to be allowed to migrate into England or gaining a permanent residential permit (Layton-Henry 2004). Secondly, working-class women might face more time constraint issues than their middle-class counterparts because they might be more likely to work in order to contribute to their household income. For example, many middle-class mothers in New Malden did not appear to have jobs, having spare time for themselves (many of my participants told me that they regularly met other mothers in cafés in the mornings after they sent their children to school). This showed stark contrast to some other working-class mothers I spoke to who had to work either full-time or part-time. For these mothers even if they worked part-time, this tended to be during their children's nursery or school hours and thus time for other activities, such as participating in the interview, was very limited. Thirdly, interviewees tended to be middle-class women who held relatively secure positions in England as migrants in terms of visa and finance, rather than those who were in precarious situations financially and legally, such as women of working-class and those who migrated with an illegal or no visa. Based on my pilot research, middle-class women appeared to be more confident and open to the idea of talking about their life stories than their working-class counterparts (Lim 2008b). Also, those who migrated with illegal documents might try to avoid engaging in any open conversation with strangers, owing to their fear of being found out about their illegitimate stay in England, making them even more invisible and hidden. In this sense, the silence or non-responsiveness of a particular population itself can be seen

as highly revealing. This issue of getting access to migrant women with precarious positions might be solved by using intermediaries who have close connections with them. However, alongside financial resources, this kind of approach will require a substantial amount of time as it will take a lot longer to identify suitable intermediaries as well as gaining the trust of the potential interviewees. Thus, it was impractical to rely on such a method for my current research. However, this could be a useful tool for a future funded research project when there could be improved financial and temporal capacity that could be built into the project design.

Second, as I am of Korean origin, I was able to speak Korean but not Japanese or Chinese. Thus, interviews with Chinese and Japanese mothers had to be carried out in English whilst I was able to use Korean with the Korean group. This might have hindered collecting more working-class mothers from Japan or China or Hong Kong as minority women who had good English skills tended to be relatively well educated and middle-class. Also, the fact that the majority of Korean and Chinese women were collected from private pre-/after-school institutions might have contributed to this as children of middle-class parents who have enough financial capacity are more likely to attend those institutions than children of working-class parents. This doubtlessly limited my findings in terms of representing women from both middle- and working-class backgrounds. Moreover, selecting the participants from an educational institution for young children and then snowballing through them could mean that those women might be like-minded people. This could mean my findings represent the views of a few selected people, rather than those of general East Asian women. On the other hand, as I pointed out earlier, the main concern of life history interviews is illustrating the subjective representation of a particular group's experiences, not being 'representative' and 'generalisable' in a quantitative sense. While bearing these limitations in mind, I tried my best to illuminate stories of women with limited financial resources and how they differed from those of affluent middle-class women. For instance, in the narrative analysis of two Korean mothers in chapter 6 I selected two women with different financial status and highlighted the potential impact of different financial circumstances on their construction of intensive mothering as well as their experiences (see also Lim 2011). However, it is important to note that this does not mean that I treat the economic situations of a family as equivalent to class but rather as a potentially important component of class that can have a bigger impact on individual lives.

Finally, this research is limited in that the majority of the interviewees were selected from East Asian communities, particularly in the case of the Korean group. During the interview one Korean participant expressed she often felt like living in Korea not in England, partly thanks to the easy availability of Korean products and services in New Malden.; also, some Korean participants talked about their engagement in the celebrations of cultural traditions in their local community, such as New Year. As I will point out in chapter 8, living in a small ethnic community could have affected mothers' experiences differently from those who did not live in or chose to stay away from such a community, especially with regard to the importance of national and/or ethnic heritage in their formation of motherhood identity.

4.4.2 Reflection on the Interviews

The life history interview offered me a great opportunity to explore an individual mother's experience in great depth and breadth. Although many mothers appeared to be slightly anxious at the very beginning of the interview, once the interview progressed, they became relaxed. By letting the participants talk freely about their life stories, the life history interview gave them the opportunity to construct their own versions of the world, which had significant meanings to themselves. The interview also offered opportunities for many participants to reflect on their past and present experiences, which they might not have done in their usual settings, as Oakley (1981) pointed out. Thus, after the interview, some of the interviewees expressed their appreciation, saying that they found the whole process therapeutic. In addition, some mothers said how much they enjoyed the interview by allowing them to revisit their past as well as to think about their lives from a different angle. Further, some participants seemed very flattered to have an eager listener to their *perceived to be* insignificant and mundane stories, which had not received special attention from anyone until then. This interaction between the participants and me definitely enabled us to establish a close rapport within a short period of time. Indeed, I felt the degree of rapport built during the life history interview was often deeper than in the normal semi-structured interview settings that I had undertaken in the pilot research (Lim 2008b). It seemed that a strong connection was able to be made through sharing their past as well as present stories with someone who was prepared to listen without prejudice. As a witness to their life stories, I appeared to be not a stranger any longer; they seemed able to trust and rely on me

at least during the interview. There were a few occasions when we shared tears together, especially when participants talked about difficult pregnancies and childbirth as well as their feelings of loneliness resulting from migration. These stories took me to my own past when I experienced similar difficulties: I had a miscarriage a couple of months before my fieldwork began; and feelings of isolation and loneliness were not alien to me at all as I had also migrated to Britain with no family or friends. In this sense, the interviews had a considerable impact not only on the participants but also on me. Listening to their painful experiences and trying to probe carefully for the effect of those accounts were often very difficult for me.

As evident from the above, the interview process was far from me just observing their versions of the world. Rather, the narratives of the participants were the co-creation of the interaction between me and the participant (see also Mishler 1986; Riessman 1990; Coffey 1999; Smart 2009). In this respect, my own identity played an important part in the interview process. Firstly, my East Asian heritage allowed me and the interviewees to relate to each other easily, *possibly* due to our similar physical features. Also, their 'perceived' commonalities between 'us' as East Asians helped an easy flow of conversation. The majority of the respondents expressed the view that East Asians shared a similar cultural background. So for example, many participants used the word 'we' quite regularly, suggesting a close connection among all East Asians. In addition, my personal background as a first generation ethnic minority female who has experienced marginalisation and discrimination helped establish a stronger connection with the interviewees while removing a barrier between them and myself. During the interview there were a few occasions when I interacted with the interviewee in a crucial way: for instance, in chapter 5 when a mother from Hong Kong talked about her experience of telling her husband to do housework as well as having begun to teach her sons to help with housework, the interviewer expressed her clear consent by saying such words as "good good". In this sense, discourse was not just the production of the interviewee but rather co-construction through the interplay with the interviewer. In addition, as I briefly stated previously, while one of my interviewees talked about her depression as a result of isolation, I shared tears with her because as a migrant woman myself, I was able to understand the sense of isolation and loneliness my participant felt. However, at the same time I did not stop there but encouraged her to continue her talk by asking why she felt that way. With my probing

question, I was able to gain further explanation, which might not have occurred otherwise. Similar to this, sharing the same gender in a male dominant world meant that I was able to empathise with the difficulties full-time housewives faced, coming from domestic drudgery, which was generally devalued in society. In the interview when some respondents expressed their feelings of boredom or a sense of insignificance by devoting their time to household labour in chapter 6, I showed my understanding by saying such things as “I can understand”. Through this process a sense of solidarity between the participants and me grew, which often encouraged them to give more detailed and open accounts of their experience.

Mishler (1986: 82) claimed that the ways in which the interviewer ‘listens, attends, encourages, interrupts, digresses, initiates topics, and terminates responses’ play a salient part in the construction of the respondent’s account. In this regard, my subjective position as well as the way I interplayed with interviewees were significant in the production of the interview data. Whilst my insider position as a first generation East Asian woman enabled me to interact with the participants in a significant manner as discussed earlier, it is important to stress that in their storytelling the perceived importance of their cultural heritage naturally emerged, rather than being elicited by my specific questions (see chapters 6 and 7). Simultaneously, my outsider status as a childless woman who was trying to conceive also seemed to play an important part in the interview process. The fact that I was childless yet in the process of trying for a baby meant that whilst interviewees could find certain connections with me, they simultaneously seemed to have felt a greater sense of power when discussing the subject of motherhood, based on their first-hand knowledge and experience in having borne and raised children, which I did not have. For example, when I asked my participants about their motherhood experiences, some of them responded with phrases like ‘ah, you don’t understand it because you haven’t got experience’ and then they explained what their experiences were like to me, which clearly showed their awareness of disparity in terms of particular knowledge between themselves and me. Hence, interviewees often talked about their experiences of childbirth and child rearing as a kind of explanation to me. In this particular instance, the narrator’s voice may have been perceived as having more authority than the interviewer’s as an expert, which made a considerable contribution to the issue of power equality.

These suggest the multilayered, dynamic characteristics of interaction between the researcher and the participant, and the potential impact of the subject position of the interviewer in the process and outcome of the interview in both positive and negative ways. In this sense, the reflexivity of the researcher is crucial in the production of high quality data, alongside being a skilled interviewer. This also leads to the discussion of validity for my study. Mason (1996) described validity as whether a study achieves what it sets out to do. Skinner (forthcoming) proposed that the achievement of good validity in qualitative research depends on the combination of the methods and the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Stenbacka (2001) suggested that the primary component that determines the validity of the data is the goal of the research, and then the interplay between the interviewer and the interviewee in realising its goal (see also Booth and Booth 2003). She also argued that a qualitative study can be seen as valid if the participant is given the opportunity to talk freely. In this sense, my study can be regarded as valid: firstly, because the participants who were part of my research topic were provided with the opportunities to talk freely about their experiences and perceptions of motherhood in their own terms; secondly, because my interaction with the participants based on both my insider and outsider positions are believed to have enabled me to explore the main aim of my study effectively: if and how first generation East Asian mothers perceive their cultural backgrounds to affect their motherhood experiences and identity formation in England, as presented in findings' chapters 5, 6 and 7. As discussed previously, I am aware that my subject position can act as both advantageous and disadvantageous in the process of data collection and analysis. However, as a first generation East Asian woman living in England who is in transition to motherhood, I have a genuine interest in the stories of East Asian women told in my study and thus have listened to them with genuine passion. For example, Frost et al. (2007) in their study of miscarriage suggested that the personal experiences of the researchers – for instance, having some reproductive problems themselves – provided them with more self-reflexivity in interpreting their participants' stories, as well as in understanding the sensitivity of the topic. Similarly, my experience as a migrant woman helped me to be more reflexive about the stories my participants told and to handle any sensitive issues with extreme care. I am also keen to make a positive contribution to their lives and social knowledge by co-constructing and illuminating those treasured stories, which I believe have reinforced the validity of my research.

Meanwhile, it would be wrong to claim that our shared commonalities as ethnic minority women in England automatically removed the distance between the participants and myself. Although we shared the same gender and ethnic positions, this did not always establish a close connection between me and the informants automatically. As the study of Liu (2006) on life history interviews with Chinese women in China showed, being a Chinese woman herself did not necessarily result in forming a good relationship with her interviewees. Hence, some of her interviewees who did not know her personally or through personal connections tended to be less open about themselves and were only involved in the interview with a stilted manner. In tune with this, Phoenix (1994) pointed out that the female interviewer – female interviewee situation does not automatically produce rapport based on gender due to the dynamics of ethnicity and class, in conjunction with the interplay of various agendas that the interviewer and the interviewee have. A similar view was presented in the article of Broom et al. (2009), which stressed the importance of taking into consideration various environmental and psychological aspects along with gender in analysing interview data. Similarly, Tang (2002), drawing on her interviews with academic mothers in China and the UK, posed a question on some feminist scholars' claim on equal power relationship between interviewer and interviewee based on gender. Whilst I strived to minimise power imbalance as well as distance between my informants and myself, this was not always possible because I, as a researcher, held more control over my project and how the data was analysed than my participants. In addition, the perception of both parties was a significant factor affecting the dynamics of the interviews (Tang 2002; Broom et al. 2009). Thus, even if we shared the same gender and ethnicity, such factors as my marriage to a British man and my status as a PhD student pursuing a professional career, affected the dynamics of the interaction between me and the interviewees. For instance, some Korean participants whose husbands were of Korean origin seemed to perceive me as a distant person, having a different cultural understanding of gender relations. Thus, when they talked about a highly gendered arrangement within their family, they sometimes sounded rather defensive, trying to protect the status quo in their household. Also, my professional status played a part in the interplay between me and the participants, similar to the findings of Broom et al. (2009). For example, a couple of home-stay mothers expressed their lack of confidence and determination to pursue their dream like me, indicating their clear perception of difference between me and themselves.

In addition to this, there was an issue of conducting life history interviews with ethnic minority mothers whose first language was not English. As I am from South Korea originally, I was able to speak Korean but could not speak Japanese or Chinese, and thus had to interview in English mothers of Japanese and Chinese origin, as stated earlier. Less fluency in English than their native language meant that their description might have been comparatively less detailed than mothers with Korean heritage. Hence, whereas Korean mothers could describe events and their emotions using nuanced words, some mothers of Japanese and Chinese origin were not always able to do so. In this respect, generally *yet not always* the Korean interview data tended to be more dense and detailed than interview data of the other groups. Without doubt I would have preferred to be able to offer the option of doing the interview in their mother tongue since it could help those whose English is not as proficient as their first language to express and describe subtle feelings and details more easily. Yet, because I was not in a position to hire other interviewers and translators who could speak and write those languages due to my situation as a research student with limited funding, it was not a viable option for me. Having said that, this did not hamper me from successfully collecting 30 individual pieces of biographical interview data, which were rich and invaluable in their own right. Though this felt like a drawback during the process of interview, the examination of the biographical paths of the individuals offered me a far greater opportunity to engage in the construction of their lives with depth and breadth whilst allowing the possibility for gathering a more holistic version of their life stories. In addition, life history interviews provided me with an avenue to explore the complexity of identity development as well as collecting rich data, and so were ultimately beneficial, despite the language barrier issue.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the methodological issues of the research in connection with the analytical framework presented in the previous chapter. My effort to bring East Asian women's stories to the centre by adopting a female-centred research method required a highly reflexive approach with the ongoing evaluation of each stage of the research in order to ensure that ethical as well as practical concerns were met (Smart 2009). The careful piloting, selection and application of various techniques enabled me to generate rich data, based on the voice of first generation East Asian mothers, providing an

immensely valuable insight into their lives in England despite some challenges and limitations arising from the research methods. In the next three chapters I will present the findings of this study founded on this carefully thought out research practice.

Chapter 5. Gendered Division of Household Labour and the Perceived Impact of Confucian Patriarchal Ideology

As discussed in chapter 4, life history interviews were used as the prime method of data collection for my research. The ensuing three chapters present the findings from life history interviews with 30 first generation East Asian mothers in England. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants pseudonyms are used throughout the chapters; for the majority of the respondents pseudonyms from their country of origin are used whilst Anglicised pseudonyms are used for three participants who have Anglicised names. This chapter focuses on the gendered division of labour within the family, in which the ethnic origins of male partners seemed to have certain degrees of effect on the gender dynamics between couples. Three different discourses came out from the analysis of the data. The most dominant pattern that emerged was that women took a primary role while their husbands played a peripheral role in childcare and housework. Whereas a minority of discourse suggested egalitarian practices or even a role reversal between couples, a considerable amount of talk displayed the persistence of a strongly gendered ideology and division of work at home. Drawing on these, I suggest that the impact of gendered beliefs on East Asian women in my study remained strong. Further to this, I put forward an argument that Confucian patriarchal ideologies and practices were still influential in the motherhood identity construction of East Asian women in England, particularly those whose husbands were also of East Asian origin. Although a small minority of women seemed to practise ‘resistant femininity’, it was overshadowed by ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘emphasised femininity’ since the majority of women continued to support the traditional gender ideology. While I present the data based on three different discourses, it is noteworthy that some women’s accounts might show contradictions and overlaps inasmuch as that they could be both displaying ‘resistant femininity’ and old style Confucian values, as will be exemplified in the accounts of Han and Hailey in section 5.2.2.

The subsequent section consists of three major parts, starting with the presentation of accounts of minority women whose husbands were presented as taking a major

responsibility for household labour or shared it equally. This will be followed by the talk of those whose husbands were said to contribute to childcare yet not on equal terms. The final section investigates the accounts of women who bore the majority share of childcare and domestic work with hardly any support from their husbands. In conjunction with the discourse put forward in the second section, the accounts of most of the women in this group were dominated by their gendered perception of housework and childcare.

5.1 Discourse of Challenging the Gender ‘Norm’: ‘*I’m like a weekend mum*’

A small minority of talk (three) indicated that childcare and housework were equally shared or their husbands took primary responsibilities for domestic duties. All of these women were of Japanese origin and married to white British men. Two of them worked full-time and one part-time. The first excerpt was the account of Yoko, a mother of two children aged four and ten who worked full-time as an administrator in a company. Yoko came to England 11 years ago to accompany her British husband, who she met in Japan:

...My husband luckily he is a primary school teacher (*I*: OK). And he is really hands-on with the children (*I*: mm-hmm), hands on with housework. He doesn't mind cooking, he doesn't mind washing-up (*I*: uh-huh). So basically Monday to Friday he does all the childcare and washing and cooking and I do, I'm like a weekend mum (laughs).

Although Yoko and her husband both worked full-time, Yoko's husband, as a primary school teacher, had more flexibility than Yoko during the week. This allowed him to pick up their children from school as well as look after them while Yoko was still at work. In addition, due to his 'hands-on' attitudes towards housework and childcare, he was happy to take a chief role in taking care of their household during the week. In a similar vein, the account of Yumi, a part-time employed mother of two children aged seven and nine who had migrated into England about ten years ago, revealed that Yumi and her husband took turns in childcare in order to look after their son by themselves without relying on external care. When their first child was born, Yumi worked in the mornings while her husband,

then a self-employed language teacher, looked after their baby; when her husband started his job in the afternoons, she took over the childcare responsibility:

Because he was with the first one (*I*: mm-hmm), we were taking over (*I*: yeah yeah), he does loads of it (*I*: OK). He knew yeah everything so um that was good for my son too, very nice being not only with mum (*I*: yeah) but he spent half a day with dad (*I*: mm) so that was really good...We have certain rules we've decided to (*I*: mm), um yeah, like discipline wise or yeah bed time and we have that kind of things and-I know that he (her husband) knows all the rules (*I*: mm) so I could easily let him put children to bed. I can trust him (*I*: all right). Of course.

For Yumi and her husband taking care of their child was the responsibility of both mum and dad, not just the mother's. She presents their parenting as an evenly distributed responsibility, with a shared understanding of certain codes involved in raising and looking after their children. Accordingly, her story indicates that she trusted her husband could do as a good job as she in the actual childcare. In addition, their children were described as extremely fortunate to have a father like her husband who was always willing to do things for the children, unlike many other fathers:

Int: In what ways do you think your husband's role as a father is important for the development of your children?

Yumi: He does a fantastic job. He is, I think, one of great dads you could imagine. He plays with them all the time and he probably does um most of the things the kids want (*I*: mm). Not money wise, he never buys [*unclear*] (*we both laugh*), but when they want to go to a swimming pool, "OK. Let's go" (*inhales*) you know that kind of thing. But, I don't want to go to, sometimes you know in the winter (*I*: mm) you just don't want to go somewhere (*we both laugh*). But he does so it's wonderful. Yeah. (p) They're lucky I think (*I*: yeah). Our kids they're lucky to have that kind of dad (*I*: oh yeah absolutely) because I know a lot of dads just sit in a living room and watch telly (*I*: mm), football and uh (*laughs*) ages and ages and the weekends (*I*: mm) so they're very lucky.

In this talk her husband was portrayed as a proactive dad who was prepared to do almost

everything their children wanted - except buying things for them - although men doing the fun stuff, such as sport or playing, may not be as challenging to the gender norm of being involved in the day-to-day care of children. This image of her loving and involved husband was highlighted in comparison with herself as well as other fathers, who were not always willing to do things for their children. Yumi perceived that this kind of 'hands-on' approach to childcare and housework created envy for many Japanese friends of hers who got married to Japanese men:

Int: In what ways do you think the fact your husband is British rather than Japanese has affected his role with the kids?

Yumi: Everyone, everyone (p) every Japanese people who come to stay with us says "Oh, I should have married to an English man." (*we both laugh*) because he does everything, he cooks, he for example, when it's raining, he puts the washing in, you know little things (*I: yeah*), yeah, that I don't even care some little stuff, he even cleans it (*I: OK*) when it's dirty (*I: chuckles*). Amazing!...

The above description clearly shows how good she perceived her husband to be in doing housework. Unlike the dominant cultural belief that women are better than men at domestic work, which frequently emerged among the talk of my interviewees, she thought her husband even paid attention to 'little things' in the house, which even Yumi did not care about. Such attitudes were represented as noticeably different from Japanese men, who were depicted as not very much involved in household labour. This sort of perceived difference between British and Japanese men also seems to have shaped Tomomi's expectation of her British husband. Tomomi was a mother of two children aged five and seven, who held an administrative role in a company. Tomomi originally came to England to study English and had lived in this country for ten years since her marriage to her British husband. Tomomi's case was exceptional out of all the interviews in that she worked full-time while her husband stayed at home and looked after their children although she used to be a stay-home mum a few years ago:

Um when the second one was age three (p) um my husband's work was kind of a bit unstable (*I: OK*). He wanted to quit the job (*I: mm*). (p) Because he was y'know um (p) uh uh found difficult to find a job, another job, I said "Yeah, I

always wanted to go back to work” (*I*: OK) so I decided to go back to work and then luckily I found this job (*I*: ah) and so my husband agreed to take care of the kids (*I*: ah OK) so that was perfect to me (*I*: yes). So yeah so I've become a full-time working mother but without obligation for the childcare (chuckles).

In Tomomi's story, as a result of their current arrangement in the house, she could work full-time with no pressure to look after children during the week. However, as can be seen from the above excerpt, there were a lot of pauses and hesitation in her account especially when she talked about her husband. This may be suggestive of the sensitivity of the topic, particularly in the social milieu where working men are considered to be the 'norm' (Connell 1987). This was talked about elsewhere in the interview, where she expressed the reversal of their roles in a highly gender divided society putting a lot of strain on her as well as her husband who found it hard to maintain his position as a home-stay dad in a female dominated arena:

Still my husband is um (p) doing the house job (*I*: yeah good). Still, to be honest with you, still very difficult. Because my husband is 13 years senior than me (*I*: OK) so he's a bit old-fashioned (*I*: mm-hmm). He is a type of person (p) he hasn't got any academic qualifications (*I*: mm-hmm). He left school when he was 16 (*I*: mm) and since then he just worked, worked, worked so it was very hard for him (*I*: mm) so still we've got a lot of stress (*I*: mm OK). Although I'm enjoying the work and um financially we are not very you know we are OK (*I*: mm), not so worry about it, but ummm he-he has been stressed (*I*: ah OK) because for him it's quite difficult to (p) (*I*: mm) be at home all day and look after the kids without, you know for mother we can have you know (p) meet with friends, have coffee (*I*: yeah yeah), but for man it's different...I mean I was quite surprised because in England a lot of women work (*I*: yeah) so still in Japan, men can't choose not to work, there is not a question about it. And so I'm quite surprised that my husband is really old-fashioned like Japanese men (*I laugh*)-(p) I mean he can cook. I mean he does, he's been a bachelor for 40 years (*we both laugh*) so he did everything himself (*I*: yeah) so it's not like you know he was protected and somebody always did something for him. He can do everything for himself...I understand that but in the meantime I'm quite surprised he is too kind of old-fashioned (*I*: OK) um mind. Because um (p)

not my immediate friends but I know a lot of families (*I: ah*) have got a similar situation like me so uh it's quite surprising, it's a bit painful because I do understand (*I: yeah*) his stress. But, I don't wanna give up my job (*I: laugh*), either (laughs) so we must find a compromise somehow.

Tomomi acknowledged the difficulties that men in her husband's position faced in society where a small minority of men stayed at home looking after the household, which caused a sense of isolation or marginalisation for him. However, at the same time she found him 'old-fashioned', particularly based on her knowledge of other English couples who took an inverted role divergent from the majority in society. She also found her husband's reaction surprising: despite the fact that he did and could do all the housework himself, his gendered way of understanding seemed to remain influential. Tomomi's husband's story can be understood in relation to the findings of Komarovsky (2004). Based on her interviews with the families of unemployed men in the USA, Komarovsky (*ibid.*) suggested that men who lost their jobs suffered as a result of their loss of identity as head of the household and breadwinner. In particular, those men who considered themselves exclusively as financial providers suffered far more than those who had developed alternative identities as father and husband. Similar to some men in Komarovsky's research, Tomomi's husband seems to have been affected by his traditional understanding of the gendered role of breadwinner and provider for the family. In her story, this traditional attitude of her husband was something Tomomi found unexpected from an English man who was supposedly different from the majority of Japanese men. As illuminated in this talk, gendered norms were deeply entrenched in the daily lives of men and women in my study, which will become more and more evident as the chapter develops.

5.2 Discourse of Women as a Primary Carer and Men as Secondary

Mirroring this persistent effect of the gender biased notions, women continued to indicate in their stories that they took a primary caring role whilst men took a peripheral role. Within this discourse a large number of participants (16) described their husbands as contributing to domestic labour although it was limited to a secondary role. Most of their

husbands worked full-time, except two - one worked four days and the other was unemployed at the time of the interview; compared to this, only three women in this group worked full-time while the predominant majority (13 out of the 16) were either home-stay mums (eight) or part-time employed (five). Seven women in this group were Chinese (five from China and two from Hong Kong), six were Japanese and three were of Korean origin. Eight of their husbands were white British and the other eight were East Asian origin – four Chinese, two Korean and two Japanese.

5.2.1 'I'm the manager and my husband is an assistant manager'

Among these women's talk, such expressions as 'he does a lot' and 'he is helpful' frequently emerged. In this discourse, their husbands tended to be portrayed in a positive light, irrespective of the actual amount of their contribution to household labour. The following excerpt is the account of Chen, a Chinese mother whose husband was also Chinese. Chen migrated to England with her husband and 13 year old daughter about five years ago in order to experience a different life. She used to work full-time, the same as her husband, before having her now two-year-old daughter in England. Since having her second child, Chen worked in their shop two days a week while her husband ran the business full-time:

Int: What kind of role does your husband play in terms of childcare?

Chen: Her daddy does a lot (*I:* OK).

Int: Does he do all the things you do, such as giving them a bath and changing nappies?

Chen: Yeah (chuckles). (*I:* very good) He understands you know the family, what the family means and he loves children (*I:* mm). Because he's got a great feeling about the children (*I:* mm-hmm) and how to look after them (*I:* mm) you know. And we understand each other very well (*I:* OK).

In this talk her husband was depicted as someone who contributed to childcare a lot as well as sharing his love for children with her. They took a traditional gender role in terms of her husband being the main breadwinner while Chen substantially reduced her working hours to take care of their children. Nevertheless, in this excerpt a sense of sharing and

understanding seems to rule over their relationship. This kind of response also emerged in the talk of Mika, a Japanese mother whose husband was British, which illuminated the image of a helpful and caring husband. Mika originally came to England to study English 17 years ago, then got married and had two children aged eight and 11. One of her children was mentally and physically disabled and needed special care. In order to help her out with the care of their child Mika's husband reduced his working days, especially due to her ill health⁹:

Int: In terms of the role of your husband looking after, what kind of role do you think he plays in raising your children?

Mika: Ah, he (p) my husband looks after them quite well (*I*: mm). He plays nicely (*I*: mm). I think he is more patient (*I*: OK) when he plays like bricks with Dean (the child with special needs), very patient yeah. He's very good at looking after children...His job at the moment, he comes home at seven, he settles down Dean (*I*: mm OK), the second one, to bed, read books (*I*: all right) half an hour everyday half an hour, even though Dean doesn't understand the story (chuckles). He always does that (*I*: mm) ...When he plays with children, he really works hard (*I*: all right)...yes, he is, I think as a father he is really a good father...

Int: When your children were quite young, how was your husband in childcare like changing nappies, cleaning and cooking?

Mika: He can't cook but he, except cooking, he changed nappies. Yeah yeah...He is quite good at doing things you know changing nappies...My husband at the moment he works in the city but uh he was, two years before, he was working in Acton (*I*: ah OK), ten minutes drive (*I*: OK) so he was very helpful (*I*: oh) you know if something happened, he always came home (*I*: yeah). He was very helpful (*I*: OK). Now he goes to the city so it's difficult but reduced the days of working. He is supposed to work five days (*I*: mm), but, since I had health problems and we've got Dean, um he asked the company to deduct money and we wanted four

⁹ It is well documented that mothers of a child with a disability tend to suffer more from stress and ill health than mothers of a non-disabled child (e.g. Miller 1992; Sen and Yurtsever 2007; Tsai and Wang 2008; Lori et al. 2008; Bilgin and Gozum 2009). For instance, Miller (1992), drawing from her study of stress level and coping strategies between mothers of physically disabled children and mothers of non-disabled children in the USA, suggested that the former experienced more depression as well as poorer health than the latter. Mika also told me that she had started to have serious health problems since having her second child with special needs.

days (*I*: OK), and the company was very understanding (*I*: OK) ...

Here Mika's husband was described as playing an instrumental role especially in looking after their child with special needs. In this he was depicted as a patient and loving father who made a significant contribution to raising their children. But, at the same time, it is noteworthy that Mika, as a housewife, did the majority of housework and care. Also, in the first half of her talk the emphasis lay in how well her husband *played with* her child. Similar to this, existing studies have identified a gendered pattern of housework in which women do more of the 'hands-on' tasks, such as cooking, cleaning and laundry than men, even when the latter participate in domestic labour (e.g. Hochschild 1989; Warde and Hetherington 1993). Similar to the talk of Mika, the interview data of Lucy, a part-time employed mother of two children aged two and five, displayed the portrayal of a participatory husband. Lucy migrated into England eight years ago to follow her Chinese husband who was studying his Master's degree at a British university:

Int: What kind of role does your husband play as a father?

Lucy: He helps me (*I*: OK). Quite good. He is good. Because I need to work for two days (*I*: mm) so he yeah (p) when my first son was born, I had to work for two days (*I*: mm) and those two days he had to take care of our son (*I*: mm-hmm) so he had to learn as quickly as possible (chuckles)-from the beginning (*I*: OK) how to take care of the baby (*I*: mm). Yes, he can do and he helps me often (*I*: all right).

Int: What kinds of things does he do?

Lucy: Um (p) these two days he does by himself (*I*: mm), he cooks for them (*I*: uh-huh), he can he does everything for these two days (*I*: ah OK), changing nappies-.

Int: How about housework?

Lucy: He does not do a lot but sometimes because most of the time I stay at home (*I*: mm) I of course I do tidying up, cleaning (*I*: mm) when I'm at home. When I go to work, he has to do that (chuckles) (*I*: mm). So yeah (p) he has to cook for the children (*I*: mm), he has to clean and wash, yeah (*I*: mm).

Although not on equal terms, Lucy's husband shared childcare and household labour with her, taking charge of domestic labour when she worked. Congruous with this, the account of Lang, a mother of two children aged one and three years old, also depicted the

arrangement of household labour as sharing, albeit not equally. Lang came from China 11 years ago to study her PhD and then married a British man:

Lang: Normally if I cook, he (her husband) plays with the children (*I:* mm). If I bathe the girl, he will take care of the elder one (*I:* all right). In the morning if I dress the girl, he will feed him (*I:* OK) a breakfast. Sometimes if he goes somewhere else, I feel hard really (chuckles).

Int: Do you think you're sharing equally with your husband?

Lang: Well (p) I think I do more, I think a little bit more like other mothers but my husband does a lot because his work (p) more involves lots of travelling (*I:* OK), yeah.

The contribution of her husband in the house was described as crucial, without which she found it hard to manage on her own. Yet, at the same time like the predominant trend in a gender segregated society identified in the literature (Van Hoof 2011) she was the one who did more in the house than her husband even if they both worked full-time. A similar pattern emerged in the talk of Ping, a Chinese mother with two children aged nine and 16, who came to England 20 years ago to follow her Chinese husband, who was studying a PhD at a British university. Her talk described her husband as playing a vital role in supporting her by sharing childcare and household chores. However, at the same time he did not always seem to consider his engagement in domestic work as part of his duty. At the time of the interview Ping worked 31 hours per week in an accounting company, decreased from 37 hours:

Ping: Well, he (her husband) plays a major role because actually I don't think if my husband doesn't help me or doesn't help with the family, I don't think I could (*I:* mm) work full-time (*I:* OK). I used to actually when the children were little, I actually worked full-time. When they grow a bit, now I relax and work part-time (*I chuckle*). But, yeah at times I was, I wanted to achieve things (*I:* mm) like getting qualifications, getting a job that pays well so in fact my husband he was really supportive although sometimes he does complain (*we both laugh*). But, overall he does a lot like playing with children, looking after children and doing lots of housework (*I:* OK).

Int: So that makes a big difference.

Ping: Yeah. I think without his support I can't. I would have to either delay my thing (*I*: mm), qualification or not being able to work full-time, then not being able to achieve what I have achieved (*I*: Indeed).

As is evident, Ping perceived that she was able to accomplish what she had achieved with the support of her husband. However, the phrase 'sometimes he does complain' was suggestive of her husband's gendered supposition that household duties were expected to be a woman's job, not a man's, and thus he was not entirely happy with his amount of involvement in housework and childcare. This is in a sense reminiscent of the proposal of Yuen-Tsang (1997) that when Chinese men are involved in household work, it is based on practical grounds rather than their support of the ideology of gender equality. Likewise, the interview data of Beth, a part-time employed mother from Hong Kong unveiled the description of a participatory and helpful husband who somehow retained a certain legacy of Chinese tradition. Beth migrated to England 15 years ago to study her Master's degree and married a second generation Chinese-British man. Since their marriage, Beth had three children aged three, six and eight. When I interviewed her, Beth's husband had recently resigned from his company and was staying at home looking after their children as well as trying to set up his own business, while she worked three days a week:

It has been fantastic because obviously previously he was working full-time so when he gets home, he is quite tired (*I*: mm) and he is not the most patient person and, when he is tired, he gets quite grumpy so the last, all this time when he is not working, you know he was able to spend so much more time with the children, much better quality time (*I*: yeah). Um (p) he is sort of picking them up from school on the days I'm working and uh after many many months I managed to convince him it would be better off him to cook on the night I come back (from work) (chuckles). It took me a while to get that into him (laughs). Most of the other mums at school I meet, who know what's happening, "Oh, of course he should be doing", but, you know I think there is still a bit kind of Chinese in his attitude that you know that's your domain you know (*I chuckle*)...I think now especially with my new sort of work, I just get very tired (*I*: mm) so it is just nice when I get home, things are almost ready on the table (chuckles). Yeah. He was a

bit reluctant at the beginning (*I: OK*) [*unclear*] but uh he's got around the idea now so he's quite all right about that (*I: OK*).

Since he stayed at home full-time, Beth's husband was more involved with looking after children as well as providing more quality time for them. Also, in another excerpt Beth described how for the first couple of months of her maternity leave her husband did all the nappy changing and bathed all the children while she just fed them. However, interestingly Beth's husband still held the idea that the kitchen was a woman's territory, parallel with the traditional Confucian ideology within the family (see Yuen-Tsang 1997). Thus, he was initially hesitant to enter the perceived-to-be female domain although eventually he accepted the idea. This in a sense shows a similarity to the account of Ping, in which her husband occasionally complained about his level of participation in domestic labour. These manifestly suggest that some men were reluctant to embrace a complete change in the way they engaged in housework due to the continuing influence of the deeply entrenched patriarchal ideology.

This gendered pattern of domestic labour was also found in the talk of Bian. She was a home-stay mum who came from China seven years ago to join her British husband and had two children aged one and six years old. In her account Bian described herself as the one who was in charge of childcare while her husband playing an assisting role:

Int: In terms of childcare, what kind of role does your husband play as a father?

Bian: Ah (p) I think normally I play the main role for my children (laughs) so my husband just like uh (p) plays a secondary role in the football (*I laugh*)... So I think I'm probably like if it is a football, I'm the manager and my husband is an assistant manager and the boys are players (*we both laugh*) (*I: I like that*).

Int: How do you share housework with your husband?

Bian: Umm (P) probably I think I do most because obviously he is working (*I: OK*). He is working so (*I: mm*) he doesn't have that much time (*I: mm*) but he does do some sharing. My husband does, he does vacuum sometimes (*I: mm*), and he does washing (*I: mm*), obviously just putting in the washing machine (*I laugh*) but he does and he does hang clothes so actually that's most of things he does. He does cook sometimes (*I: OK*). He is very enjoying cooking Indian because he is very

very proud he can cook some nice Indian food (*I: ah*) and obviously most heavy things he will do at home (*I: OK*). Every Friday recycle, that's his job (*I: OK*) yeah he does share. Another one is I don't think I can manage everything (*I: yeah*) without his help with children so he does help (*I: OK*).

In the above excerpt Bian used an analogy of football in describing the arrangement of household labour with her husband, in which she was depicted as a manager and her husband as an assistant manager. Also, her talk indicates clearly gendered relations within her household that even if her husband engaged in some aspects of domestic work, the kind of job he did most of the time was dealing with heavy work. As illustrated in this, men in this group played a peripheral role in the house, especially when they were the main breadwinner. This was again echoed in the account of Sook, a home-stay mother with one child aged four, who came from Korea ten years ago to study English and married a British man:

Int: What kind of role does your husband play in childcare?

Sook: He is just assisting (*I: mm*). For children their mothers come first. A mother plays a role of sails (chuckles) whereas a father simply helps her by assisting. Always children must have a mother (*I: mm*) (p) I didn't realise it when my daughter was younger, she used to go to her dad when she was younger (*I: mm-hmm*). But as she gets older, if her dad tries to take her to the park, she just says "No! Mummy!" (*I: ahh*) As she grows older, what shall I say (chuckles), she seems to get closer to her mummy (*I: mm*). But, at the same time the father's role is also important. He plays a minor supporting role which the mother can't fill in (*I: mm*).

Int: How much does your husband contribute to housework?

Sook: I often say that things look different to men's eyes (*I: mm*). For a woman's eyes a problem can always be seen even if a man does his best (chuckles) (*I: mm*). Even though he says he has cleaned the house, if I look at it, I can see dust (chuckles) even if they've done their best. Uh anyway, what matters is his gesture to help. Considering that, although he's not as clean as me (chuckles) (*I: mm*), considering that he helps - despite that, it seems different (p) between Western men and Korean men (*I: mm*). As you must have seen, fathers seem to look after

their children very well here when I look at them outside (*I: yeah*). Pushing buggies enthusiastically - (*I: yeah*), taking children to the park and changing nappies (*I: mm*), they're doing very well like women (*I: mm*). I sometimes talk to my sister (who is in Korea) on the phone. She complains, "How come he (her husband) doesn't even move fingertips. He hasn't changed nappies even once."...British men are very different from Korean men (*I: mm*). My sister says to me, "You should know how lucky you are," (chuckles). So that aspect seems different.

According to Sook's account, mothers' care was essential for children whereas fathers' was subsidiary. Therefore, the central role of a father was represented as filling the gap a mother could not complete. Sook's talk also suggests that men were born to be different from women in conducting housework, having less ability to notice minor details than women. In line with this, her account is indicative of her gendered assumption, which resulted in little expectation of her husband with regard to household duties. Thus, even though she was not satisfied with the job her husband had done in the house, she tried to recognise and appreciate that he made an effort to help her. This kind of attitude seems to have affected the perceptions of many East Asian women in this group. Meanwhile, her British husband's contribution to housework was depicted as considerably different from Korean men who were still perceived to adhere to the traditional gender norm by not engaging in household labour at all. A similar response also came out in the talk of Asuko, a home-stay Japanese mother with two children aged four and eight. Sara migrated 11 years ago to follow her British husband, who she met in Japan:

Int: How do you think coming to Britain has affected your life?

Asuko: (P) mm if I married to a Japanese man and lived in Japan, it would be totally different (P) (*I: In what ways?*) Of course everybody is different but um um husbands of my friends in Japan they work very hard, very long time (*I: yeah*). They don't have much time to spend with children and family and that's maybe not good (*I: no*).

Asuko's talk suggests that her British husband was more participatory in the house than Japanese men due to the long-working-hour culture in Japan (see Hirao 2001), which was

represented as having negative implications. However, despite the suggestion of her British husband being more involved in childcare, her account displays a strongly gendered presumption of roles within the family:

Int: How is your husband looking after your children?

Asuko: He helps (*I:* OK)...For children father and mother is a little bit different. He can give the things I can't give (*I:* mm), such as more fun stuff (chuckles), and mothers are always (p) always cooking and looking after them or like a father he can take them out and they play more (P) in our case yeah (*I:* OK).

As can be seen from this extract, although men helped in the house their contribution tended to be limited or mainly focused on playing with children while women often carried out actual house chores, such as cleaning and cooking, similar to the account of Mika earlier. Also, reflecting the general acceptance of gender roles between couples, these women appear to have had different expectations of their husbands in household work from themselves. Hence, even if men did not share domestic labour with women equally, men's engagement in any kinds of housework seems to have been depicted predominantly positively.

5.2.2 Limitations on Women's Resistance to Traditional Confucian Gender Ideology

Meanwhile, accounts of a couple of participants in this group – women as primary carers and men as secondary - suggest that some women resisted the traditional division of labour at home by 'training' (Hailey) or requesting their husbands, who were brought up in the typical Confucian patriarchal way, to engage in housework and childcare:

Hailey: My mother-in-law is really traditional (*I:* mm), and what she did-she's got three boys (*I:* mm). In the older days men and boys in the family were the heads (*I:* mm). They didn't need to do any housework, they just only ate and worked, earned money. They didn't care the housework (*I:* mm), they didn't care the children. That's how my mother-in-law brought up my husband (*I:* OK). But I teach him,

“When I cook, you wash (*we both chuckle*) yeah and um you need to give the” because I had my boys through caesareans (*I: yeah*), I couldn’t really bathe them when they were babies (*I: yeah*). I told my husband, “Bring them and bathe them. I can’t really bend my back. You know my scar hurts.” And I trained him (*chuckles*). When we go to my parents-in-law’s house for dinner, three boys, they all sit to watch telly (*I: phew*) until mum cooks and puts all the things on the table (*I: yeah*) and everything is laid on, and she says “Dinnertime!” and they just sit and eat. Afterwards, they just go back to watch telly again. They don’t do any tidying up or washing the dishes. So I said (to my husband), “No! I can’t accept that. (*I: no*) When you are at home, I cook, you wash.” (*I: yeah*). You know it’s difficult, difficult to teach a (p) man of his age (*I: oh yeah yeah*) so I teach my boys, “You need to help. Do a little bit of housework.” (*I: good good*). You know I think it’s fair (*I: yeah*).

Hailey was a home-stay mother of two children aged seven and ten, who came from Hong Kong 16 years ago to study a degree course. She got married to a second generation Chinese British man soon after completing her degree. As can be seen, Hailey was highly conscious of (un)fairness within the family. Based on this, in her story she challenged the traditional gender ‘norm’ that the older generation sticks to by directly confronting and constantly reminding her husband that she was not prepared to just follow what the older generation did. She also started educating her sons so they could learn to embrace the idea of sharing domestic work from childhood. Consonant with Hailey’s talk, Han, a home-stay Korean mother with one child aged five, continuously instilled the idea of how important her husband’s role in the development of their child was by asking him to get involved in certain childcare tasks. Han moved to England five years ago to follow her Korean expatriate husband:

I’ve told my husband you should make an effort if you want to get close to our baby. Thus, he did most of nappy changes and bathing our son (*I: ah*). At the beginning he didn’t know what to do. When he changed nappies, if the baby had pooh, he just gave up and looked for me. So I just left him to sort it out by himself, whether he cleaned the baby or not. In the end he became an expert (*I: mm-hmm*)

so whenever our baby showed a sign of having pooh, I told my husband “Take him” (chuckles) and he took the baby and sorted him out by himself (*I*: oh)...

Rather than letting him get away with avoiding the actual care of their child, Han made her husband learn to look after the baby through trial and error. As is evident, these women appear to have been very cognisant of how things are moving on as well as how to negotiate power relations with their husbands. In this sense, it could be argued they were practising ‘resistant femininity’. However, despite this evidence of questioning the dominant forms of a gender ideology, there seem to be limits in their resistance to the Confucian patriarchal norms pervading in East Asian families. Although they refused to be constrained by the traditional gender notion, this did not quite reach to the egalitarian stage where a genuine level of equality was espoused and practised. For instance, although Hailey adamantly opposed the conventional gendered segregation of work at home, when it came to childcare, the deeply ingrained gender biased belief in East Asian societies appears to have taken longer lasting effects on her:

Int: What is your opinion about the traditional idea, men go out to work and women look after the house?

Hailey: I think it’s better (p). The traditional way is better (p) because (*inhales*) I believe childhood is very important for everyone (*I*: mm). If parents both of them are working, the child is lack of attention or teaching (*I*: mm). Later on they will have a lot of problems (*I*: OK). If your mum is a full-time house wife, probably it’s beneficial for the children (*I*: OK). It’s better.

Int: How about mum working and father looking after children full-time?

Hailey: Ummmm I find it would be difficult, wouldn’t it? I think (p) I know some of my friends have the same thing but for the children it’s not a good example (*I*: OK). Except the man works at home (*I*: mm), the other one is not a good example for, especially for the boys. The woman goes to work and I stay at home is not a good example (*I*: OK).

This suggests that, even if she believed things were changing and men should also share the brunt of housework, it was still the mother not the father, who had to be present and available for her dependent children in order to provide emotional and physical security. At

the same time, this was not just about ensuring the safety and happiness of the children but also setting a good example for them to follow suit when they became grown-ups. In this respect, for Hailey a father's role as a main breadwinner is particularly crucial for her sons who are likely to learn directly from the example of their father. Indeed, the gendered ideology seems to be such a deep seated belief, hidden under the skin of their seemingly progressive attitudes. Thus, as the interviews progressed, the narratives of some women began to reveal many contradictions and paradoxes. For instance, the talk of Han, who was highly conscious of gender issues in society, revealed her continuing support of the idealised notion of a father who had an untainted image, contrary to that of a mother, who had to deal with the basics of her children's daily lives:

Mum's role is, in fact, to provide what he needs and looks after him on a daily basis (*I: mm*). But, for him, when he looks at the general picture, dad is wonderful (*p*) and dad plays with him well; dad doesn't nag him to study (*we both chuckles*). And if mum upsets him, he can go to his dad and get comfort (*I: uh-huh*)...It's OK for me to appear to be somewhat imperfect to our child. But, with regards to his dad, I constantly tell my husband to show a somewhat formal and standardised good image of a father to our son even if it may be a bit faked (*I: mm-hmm*)...

In the above a mother was depicted as someone who did all the tedious jobs behind the scene and who could show weaknesses to her children whereas a father was portrayed as the one who maintained his unspoilt image of a wonderful man to his child and who was almost not "real". This in a sense is reminiscent of the traditional image of a Confucian father who is idealised and idolised as a moral authority in the family (Ho 1994). Even if this new image of a father appears to be more engaging in childcare than the past, it still echoes the older idea of a father who enjoyed the highest respect within the family. This illustrates that women's stories are at times contradictory and overlap as I stated at the beginning of this chapter. In addition, as is clear from this section, the discourse of these women reflects dominant cultural practices found in existing literature, based on Western societies as well as East Asia (e.g. Hochschild 1989; Coltrane 2000; Sung 2003; Won and Pascall 2004; Gregory and Milner 2008). Accordingly, even though many couples seem to have moved away from the traditional notion of household labour, gendered ideology continued to influence the majority of the participants in my study. However, it is difficult

to separate out whether Confucianism is the key to understanding this phenomenon and whether there is a difference between East Asian and Western women. This may be an amplified form of what English women are experiencing because of Confucianism.

5.3 Discourse of Women as a Sole Carer

This section presents the accounts of a substantial minority of mothers (11), who disclosed even stronger gender divided ideologies and practices within the family than the previous group. In this context women were portrayed as taking almost sole responsibilities for childcare and household chores, regardless of their employment status. Except for one who got married to a white British man, husbands of all the participants in this group were of East Asian origin – seven Korean and three Chinese. Seven women in this group were Korean origin and three were Chinese. Seven of them were stay-home mothers, three were full-time employed and one part-time. All of their husbands worked full-time.

5.3.1 *‘Her daddy doesn’t do any housework’*

Predominantly the discourse of these women showed the portrayal of a husband who was almost indifferent to domestic work. For example, this was identified in the account of Hua, a mother from China with two children aged three and seven, who came to England 12 years ago to follow her Chinese husband, who was studying a Master’s degree at a British university. Hua was a highly qualified, full-time employed professional in a multinational company. However, it was her who had to organise and manage her daughter’s school work and activities as well as her son’s childcare arrangements whilst her husband worked or entertained himself watching movies:

Int: In terms of your husband’s role as a father, how important is his role for the development of your children?

Hua: Um (p) not very important (laughs). Firstly he is a very um (p) career minded (*I:* OK) guy...Even when he is at home (*I:* mm), busy with talking to various people (*I:* mm) and working on proposals (*I:* mm) or sometimes enjoys himself (*we both chuckles*) watching films (chuckles) (*I:* mm). [*unclear*] And he never

watches or (p) stays making sure his daughter (*I: mm*) does piano properly (*I: mm*). For example, he never takes her to swimming lessons (*I: mm*) even though he is at home (*I: mm*). He never takes her to piano lessons (*I: mm-hmm*), he never. He always escapes and he will try to escape (*I chuckle*) everything. It's not his thing (*I: OK*).

It is manifest from the above that her husband hardly contributed to household labour even if Hua also had a demanding full-time career. He was described as 'a career minded guy' who was not interested in looking after their children or helping out with housework. However, her other interview data indicated that Hua was also very driven in developing her career. As a result, Hua had to deal with a double burden, trying to advance in her career as well as taking the vast majority of the childcare responsibilities. Similar to Hua, Jia, a mother of one child aged nine, did most of the household chores even though she ran her own business full-time. Jia came from China three years ago to join her Chinese husband, who was working in England after completing his PhD at a British university:

Some men do a lot of things (at home) (*I: yeah*) but her daddy doesn't do any housework. In terms of housework, he is so lazy you know (*I chuckle*), [*unclear*]. His room is so messy and sometimes I do the cleaning (*I: OK*). And for cooking, even if I'm here (in her own shop), he is just waiting (*I laugh*) so I have to go back and cook and wash after finishing (the meal). I wash up everything (*I: OK*).

This illuminates the imagery of typically patriarchal men who expect women to do everything in the house. As seen in the talk of Hailey in the previous section, the typical reason for this was represented as those men's fixed ideas about gendered roles, inherited from their upbringing, which Hua described as 'They (men) are not trained to do anything at home'. Reflecting this, the account of Fang, a stay-home mother from China with one child aged six, is indicative of clear gender segregation in her household. Fang migrated into England a year ago with her Chinese husband mainly for their daughter's education:

Int: Does your husband help you look after your daughter or housework?

Fang: No. He likes my daughter but he just likes playing with his daughter not looking after her (*I: all right*). He said "I don't know what I can do. What time she

drinks water, what time she eats breakfast, I don't know, I don't know anything. You do everything.” (*I*: OK)

Int: Does he do any cleaning?

Fang: No. Nothing. Washing clothes, cleaning the home, no (*I*: mm).

Later in the interview Fang stated that her husband hardly helped her at home, leaving her to do all the household chores even when she worked full-time in China. This highly restricted contribution of their husbands at home made their lives harder, especially as migrants who did not have family networks in England. Hojin, a Korean mother with two children aged one and three years old, talked of the difficulties she faced in England. Hojin came from Korea initially to study fashion, then returned to Korea without completing her study and came back to England nine years ago with her Korean husband for what she described as a better life:

To be honest, if it was in Korea, I could go out to watch a film with my husband (*I*: uh-huh) while leaving the children with our parents because there are our mums, sisters or mothers-in-law there...But, here (in England) it's too hard for mothers (*I*: yeah) because there is nobody to look after children. I always have to care for the children and my husband comes home and has a rest, same as men, Korean men...Looking after children for 24 hours itself is very hard (*I*: yeah). So there is nowhere to leave the child. Even if I want to have a rest, I can't do it so it's harder.

This illustrates difficulties migrant women with children might face. It also gives insight into what interviewees perceived to be the typical attitudes of many East Asian men who did not help their wives at home. Hojin's husband was described as behaving like he had completed his duty as a breadwinner after work, like many other Korean men. When this continued in an environment where they did not have close family to help with childcare, she talked of how her life became even harder, with no chance to have a break from childcare. The talk of Mai, a home-stay mother of four children aged 14, 13, 12 and eight, also unveiled a similar story in which she did not receive any help from her husband and thus had to take sole responsibility. Mai came from Japan 20 years ago to study a degree course and got married to a British man:

Int: Did you get any break from childcare, for instance at the weekend?

Mai: No. I didn't have that time. I didn't know anybody (*I:* all right).

Int: How about your husband?

Mai: (p) My husband is not really helpful (*I:* mm). I think he doesn't like babies you know (*I:* OK) ...Maybe he doesn't want to help.

Int: How about bathing them and cleaning the house?

Mai: No. He didn't like that.

Int: So you did all yourself?

Mai: Yeah.

Mai as a migrant woman did not have her family in England. Even though she got married to a British man, she also did not appear to have relatives of her husband she could ask for help. Hence, her husband was the only person she could turn to yet she suggested he was not interested in looking after their children, which resulted in Mai having to deal with all those tasks on her own. Reflecting this indisputably gender biased arrangement within Mai's household, her account also suggests a highly gendered understanding of men and women's roles:

Int: In terms of tradition, men go out to work and women stay at home, what is your opinion about it?

Mai: (p) You know I think men should go out and work (*I:* OK). Sometimes there are fathers doing mother's role (*I:* OK). I think it's because the father hasn't got a job. I think men should go out and work (*I:* OK).

Int: Why do you think that way?

Mai: (P) It's more like women are capable of doing stuff, little things. Men can't, sometimes miss out small things. Men can't do two things at once but women are capable of doing so many things at once (*I:* OK). In that case, women are more suitable staying in the house...

For Mai women were innately designed to perform 'little things' and have the capability to do multi-tasks, which was regarded as suitable for housework, contrasting to men. In addition, men were depicted as having less ability to pay attention to minute details and end up 'missing out small things', similar to Sook's talk in the previous section. Moreover,

even if she did not say directly here, her account suggests a similar attitude to Hailey's, which emphasised that men should set a good example as a breadwinner for her children by doing what men are born to do. Thus, men are supposed to engage in 'big' tasks outside the home, rather than staying at home doing 'little things' women are supposed to do.

5.3.2 *'Men need a sense of self-achievement'*

The above kind of beliefs persisted in sculpting the lives of some East Asian couples. This emerged in the data of Mijung, a home-stay mother of two children aged four and seven, who migrated from Korea nine years ago to accompany her Korean husband:

Int: In what ways does your husband contribute to housework?

Mijung: My husband? (*I:* yes) Uh he says he helps me (chuckles) but from my eyes he is not the kind of person who helps a lot (*I:* uh-huh). I don't have much ambition for myself. I don't have such desire as managing and developing myself but my husband has great ambition for himself (*I:* mm-hmm), including sports, and he's interested in many things and he's got to accomplish them perfectly (*I:* mm)...so he found it difficult. Becoming parents accompanies sacrifice but he's treated himself and our relationships as more important (than children) (*I:* mm-hmm) ...

In her account, Mijung described her husband as someone who prioritised himself over their children, unlike herself. As a result, he did not contribute to household labour, investing more time and care for his own development. At the same time, 'he found it difficult' because having children shifted the focus of their relationship to children while challenging his self-centred characteristics as he was required to give up certain part of his own desire. Although the differences between Mijung and her husband were depicted as individual ones, this kind of divergence between men and women seems not to have been confined to this couple. The talk of Minju, a Korean mother of three children aged six, seven and eight, who came from Korea 12 years ago to study English and got married to a Korean man, also displays gender biased beliefs which she perceived to be prevalent in Korean families:

Korean men don't have the mentality that they should look after babies (*I: yeah*). He still doesn't have that sort of mentality (laughs). He helped me at that time (when I delivered the baby) because I needed, but now he just focuses on his work outside the home (*I: mm-hmm*). Doing paid work is for the family. That's the Korean mentality (*I: mm*) so I don't ask him to do housework. Looking at him work so hard I don't want to burden him with housework....My husband, characteristically, is not a person who enjoys taking the children out (*I: mm-hmm*). So I don't want to pressurise him by forcing him to behave like British men (*I: mm*), which doesn't suit his personality. Even if I want to ask him to do so, I don't think it's right (*I: mm-hmm*). So we just live in our own way following our own culture (chuckles).

For Minju her husband's attitudes towards household labour were legitimate as they were a part of her perceived Korean culture where the gendered segregation of roles was widely accepted. Thus for her, by playing his main role as a financial provider, her husband fulfilled his duty as the head of the family. In addition, his lack of interest in childcare was described as his "innate" personality. Therefore, her account suggests that it would be unfair for her to try to change her husband's characteristics by pushing him outside his cultural boundary. Furthermore, analogous with Mijung's talk, men and women were represented differently in Minju's talk:

...What my husband does in terms of childcare is very limited (*I: mm*) because my husband, men need a sense of self-achievement to some extent (*I: mm-hmm*). Um women can give it up for children but men although not all men are like that. Some men who I know really like doing housework, cooking, looking after children (*I: mm*) but my husband's characteristics don't like such things, housework. He absolutely hates doing them. When I worked, my salary was higher than my husband (*I: yeah*). So it would be effective if I go out to work and earn money while my husband looks after the family at home. It would be more effective but it doesn't seem right. Thus, men, for characteristics like my husband, the husband works outside and when he comes back home, his wife gets supper ready, it is Korean culture, Korean mind (chuckles) and I also agree with it. When children are young, mothers tend to gently look after children rather than dads (*I:*

mm). Um my husband's case he offers a big care (*I: mm*). No is absolutely no for him so children can't go near him any longer. But mothers have lots of flexibility (*I: mm*) so children come nearer to their mums. As a result, children normally don't tell their troubles in mind to their dads, especially girls (*I: mm-hmm*). But they tell their mums (*I: yeah*). Um children feel closer to their mums so I think mums should look after children, especially when they're still young.

Consistent with Mijung's account, it was described that men need a sense of self-achievement whereas women can forgo it for children. It was therefore seen as customary for her to stop working in order to look after her children, even if she was paid a higher salary than her husband and enjoyed working. Continuing this representation of men and women as intrinsically different, Minju depicted her husband as providing 'big' care although its actual meaning was not clear, which shows a similarity to the discourse of Mai. Minju's account also strongly reflects the image of the traditional Confucian motto of 'strict father and gentle mother', in which a father as the head of family is expected to exert authority while a mother counterbalances this by acting as a shelter for children. In this, the father's main role within the family is not to be engaged in 'hands-on' household labour but to provide moral guidelines with authority:

Int: In what ways do you think your husband's role is important in the development of your children?

Minju: Um education-wise. Education yet it's not studying that kind of education but home education (*I: mm*) to teach my children to respect their parents and respect the elders. In that sort of things I'm a bit soft style and men, my husband tends to be like "This is not right because of this and that". He is a type of person who sets clear rules (*I: mm*). If both parents are soft, they blindly give freedom to their children (*I: mm-hmm*). It doesn't seem right. So by one parent being understanding and the other making rules (*I: mm*) children become accustomed from childhood to the idea that there are rules, there are rules at home and there are such rules in society. If parents show too much affection to children, children treat their parents without respect and if they treat their parents without respect, children also treat the elders without respect, think of them without respect (*I: mm*). I think that's not right at all...Not because an elder is worthy of being respected, my

husband educates our children to become polite to the elders based on the fact itself that they're seniors. I also think he's right (*I: mm*). So my husband's role is to teach our children a sense of value, not the textbook education.

As evident from this, Minju's husband was mainly involved in the moral education of their children while the physical labour required for ensuring their children's educational performance, such as helping with their homework, was left to Minju. Also, in this, giving undue freedom to children was represented as spoiling them by not setting clear moral boundaries. Having a set of rules in the house was therefore presented as vital in guiding children's lives, especially teaching them to respect their parents and seniors. Relating to this, the authority a father exerted as the head of the family was described as salient, particularly as a mother tended to be perceived as soft and lenient. This kind of role played by the father was depicted as crucial for maintaining Korean cultural values, reflecting the strong Confucian principles of the significance of seniority and respect for elders.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated that whilst people's perception and practice of gender roles were thought to be shifting by some women, the gendered division of labour remained relatively firm among many East Asian women and men in my study. As I pointed out, the discourse of a majority suggested that a high percentage of men were involved in childcare and housework in my research. Moreover, there was evidence showing that some couples took a divergent role from the mainstream, by men playing the chief caring role while women played a secondary role. In this case, the couples were practising equal gender relationships, in lieu of the conventional gender relations founded on 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity'. In addition, some talk unveiled that some women exercised resistance by refusing to accept the traditional gendered division of work at home and by requesting their husbands' participation in the actual childcare and domestic chores. Notwithstanding, gender norms appear to have continued in their impact on the lives of East Asian women in England to a significant extent. This may also in part explain why the predominant majority of male partners (27/30) worked full-time while only eight women were employed full-time. Consistent with this trend, the

account of a mother whose husband took the primary caring role by staying at home displayed the tension arising from its clash with the traditional gender notion. In addition, despite evidence displaying men's increasing engagement and even a change in the way men and women shared work in the home, it is indisputable from the data that the majority of women interviewed for this study undertook most of the household labour, disregarding their work status. In relation to this, the perception of many women appears to be gendered thus accepting this kind of role division as the status quo. In this sense, the majority of women adhered to the notions of 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity', which support the overall domination of men over women in any given society. As a result, men who made a contribution to household labour in whatever degrees or forms were mostly described in a favourable way.

This conventional gender divided belief seems to be more prevalent and deeply ingrained amongst respondents with husbands of East Asian origin than those with husbands of British heritage. Discourses of the participants of mixed marriage suggested that their husbands were more participatory than East Asian men in household labour. Drawing on this, it can be suggested that an important factor in the gendered division of labour among the East Asian women interviewed was the interplay between their and their husbands' individual ideologies. In this respect, the interaction between East Asian couples seems to have consolidated the segregation of work at home by strongly holding onto the ideas of 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity' founded on Confucian patriarchal norms. In the meantime, various biographical factors, such as women's length of settlement in England and their main reasons for migration, do not appear to have a significant impact on the gendered patterns of housework and childcare. For instance, the gendered division of household labour and gendered understanding of men and women's role seemed to remain strong in both the accounts of Jina, who came to accompany her expatriate husband and had been in England for less than five years, as well as that of Minju, who came to England to improve her career by studying further and had lived in England over ten years. When accounts relating to motherhood and employment are examined, it becomes clear that this gender issue is threaded in the identity of East Asian women in a more complex manner than it appears to be. It is because a complex web of different ideologies of motherhood and employment comes into play, making the gender dynamics appear to be more complicated than when just looking at the discourse around

the gendered division of household labour. Now I turn to narratives of home-stay and working mothers, which underscore the complexity of identity for women in my study.

Chapter 6. Motherhood and Employment: Accounts of Home-Stay Mothers

Continuing the examination of the gendered division of household labour in chapter 5, this research now turns to the topic of motherhood and employment. The aim of the chapter is to present findings from the interview data of home-stay mothers, which are indicative of strong support for an intensive mothering ideology in which the mother's ongoing presence was seen as vital for children's wellbeing. The dominant theme that emerged from the data of stay-home mothers was the salience of mother's care for the emotional security and development of children. In addition, founded upon the distinctly gendered notion, looking after children and dedicating time and energy to them were often described as what mothers are supposed to do. Indeed, intersecting with other socio-economic elements, an intensive mothering ideology and their gendered understanding appeared to be the most determining factor affecting the decision of the majority of stay-home mothers in my study. This was especially more prevalent among mothers from Korea and Japan than those from mainland China.

Most home-stay mothers in this study (13/15) had university degrees except two mothers who achieved diplomas; four of them obtained their highest educational qualifications in Britain (three university degrees and one Master's). Seven home-stay mothers came from South Korea, five from Japan, two from China and one from Hong Kong. Eight women initially came to England to study while seven came to accompany their husbands or boyfriends. With the exception of one who got married straight after education, 14 women used to work before having children: all of them had professional, skilled or administrative jobs. However, all stay-home mothers 'chose' not to work in order to care for their children or family, with the exception of one from China who used to work yet could not find a job in England mainly due to her English. Two mothers indicated their household income was over £ 80,000; one £ 70,000-80,000; one £ 60,000-70,000; one £ 50,000-60,000; one £ 40,000-50,000; two £ 30,000-40,000; two £ 20,000-30,000; and two less than £ 20,000; and three mothers opted out of providing this information.

This chapter consists of two main parts. The first section examines the narratives of two home-stay mothers and the ways in which these women tried to make sense of their life and attempted to ‘resolve’ disjunctives or ruptures in their life through storytelling. The close analysis of narratives allows us to gain the contextualised understanding of individual women’s lives because they are context specific due to the intersection of different identities (Riessman 1990). I therefore aim to highlight how different identities emerge through such interplay at divergent times and spaces. By examining the narratives of individual women, I also intend to demonstrate the complexities and dynamics of identity construction of East Asian mothers in England. Drawing on the discursive themes emerged in the narratives, the second part presents discourse of other home-stay mothers, focusing on three sub-themes: the perceived ‘irreplaceable’ importance of the mother’s care for young children; the sense that that’s what mothers are supposed to do; and the mothers’ thoughts on the impacts of not working.

6.1 Stories of Two Home-Stay Mothers

This section examines the narratives of the two women from South Korea. The reasons for choosing these two particular women’s narratives are: firstly, their stories were good examples to illustrate the similarities and differences within a particular cultural heritage; secondly, even if the two women shared the same ethnic and gender status, their financial situation was considerably different, together with divergence in their life paths; thirdly, despite these differences, their narratives indicated dominant discursive themes identified among many other home-stay mothers; finally, albeit with their high educational level and opportunities to work in England, they both ‘chose’ to stay at home looking after their children. In these respects, their stories were representative of the majority of home-stay mothers in my study.

The stories that follow are excerpts from long narratives of two mothers. In order to illuminate shifts in their identity at different temporal and spatial contexts, parts of narratives, particularly in connection with employment and motherhood, have been selected and presented here (See chapter 4 for more information). The lines are numbered

in order to ease reference.

6.1.1 Narratives of Minju

6.1.1.1 Before Coming to England

The first narratives are based on the interview with Minju, a Korean mother in her late thirties, with three children aged eight, seven and six. Minju had lived in England over ten years and initially came to Britain to study English. After graduating from university, Minju worked for a few years in Korea, during which time she decided to come to England. Here is her account of her work and why she came to England:

- 01: In Korea I worked as an international telephone operator-(*I: mm*)
- 02: and then worked in a trading company (*I: mm-hmm*)...
- 03: When I worked as an international telephone operator,
- 04: it was so boring.
- 05: I started working there thinking it looked glamorous,
- 06: but once I began, I realised-the work was too simple...
- 07: So I left the job and began working in a trading company (*p*)
- 08: and it was great fun.
- 09: There was a huge amount of work to do in that company (*I: mm*).
- 10: As I had studied English hard,
- 11: I used the skills a lot in the company (*I: mm-hmm*).
- 12: I translated manuals and did a bit of interpretation as well (*I: mm*).
- 13: And then I also did creating word documents in English (*I: mm*).
- 14: It was simply fun (*I: mm*).
- 15: It was fun but I felt I need to improve my English.
- 16: We uh (*P*) used to have trade fairs (*I: mm-hmm*)
- 17: and at one time we had a trade fair and an English man attended (chuckles)
- 18: but I couldn't understand his single pronunciation.
- 19: And I realised that my English was really bad (*I: mm*)
- 20: and I decided to go to England and study English.

21: So I left the company and came to England (*I*: mm).

In this first narrative Minju projected herself as a young woman who enjoyed challenging work, actively seeking to improve her skills. Her proactive characteristics were effectively demonstrated throughout the narrative, beginning with the contrasting comparison between her two previous occupations (lines 03-14) and then her decision to come to England in order to improve her English. Rather than staying in an uninspiring job which involved “boring”, “too simple” tasks, Minju moved onto a demanding new job, which required “a huge amount of work to do”. Instead of seeing this demand as negative, she took it as impetus to put to use the skills that she had honed for many years. However, she did not stop there. Instead of being complacent about her English, she boldly quit the job she greatly enjoyed and came to England.

Here Minju’s worker identity emerged prominent in intersection with her other identities. In this phase of her life it appears from her story that Minju’s focus was the development of her future career as her account showed a strong desire to face new challenges in order to improve her skills and employability. As will be discussed later in the chapter, Minju intended to carry on her job, moving onto a bigger company based on her improved skills. However, her biography took a divergent turn from her initial plan after she came to England.

6.1.1.2 After Migration and Motherhood

When Minju came to London, she took her language course. Then, she worked as a receptionist in the language school where she studied. During this period, she met her Korean husband who also came to England to study. When they got married, she quit the job because of what she conveyed as the common cultural perception dominant in Korea, as she described, “In our country [South Korea] we tend to think we should stop working once we get married.” Her story suggests that experiences of some East Asian women in England may continue to be influenced by Confucian patriarchal norms, in which women are expected to stay at home and look after the household once they get married. In this process her gender identity became dominant, diminishing her worker identity. After their marriage, Minju had three children and continued to stay at home. Having children appears

to have reinforced her gender identity further, having brought a dramatic shift in her perception of employment:

22: *Int*: How has your perception of work changed after having children?

23: *Minju*: In the past I had a bit of an ideal of becoming a career woman (*I*: mm-hmm).

24: ‘Ah! A real career woman! (using a funnily exaggerated voice)

25: Uh I also hoped to become a secretary, if I improve my English,

26: I will work for a better company’ like that.

27: Um I was greatly interested in how other people thought of me

28: so if I became a career woman,

29: other people would think of me as

30: ‘OH, REALLY WONDERFUL WOMAN! A SUCCESSFUL WOMAN!’ (*I* chuckle)-

31: However, now I have more interest in my children doing well (*I*: mm).

32: So in the past my dream was that I became successful-

33: but now (p) I want my children to do better than me...

34: I don’t care what I do now (*I*: mm).

35: Even if I do an insignificant job like cleaning,

36: (P) even if other people say to me “How can you do such a job?”

37: I don’t care now (*I*: mm)...

In this extract her motherhood identity emerged as of paramount importance. In the meantime, she talked about her past dream of becoming “a career woman” in an almost joking way (“Ah! A real career woman”/ “Oh, really wonderful woman! A successful woman!”); its description was rather superficial, mainly linked to success and glamour, lacking real substance. Lines 28-30 implied that being a career woman meant a transient and superficial gain based on “how other people thought of” her. By contrast, her motherly feelings towards her children were depicted as solidly built inside and thus were protected from external influences as she suggested in lines 31-37. In this sense, she constructs her past dream as lacking the intrinsic value motherhood has. This is a window through which we are able to observe the process in which Minju constructed her past from her present viewpoint: now as a mother whose interests were focused on her children, her past

ambition conveyed as trivial. As a result, there was a vital shift in the way she perceived herself: if it was all about her in the past, it was all about her children at the time of the interview. She therefore suggested that she did not care about what kind of job she did and she was prepared to do even “an insignificant job like cleaning” if it benefited her children. Given this, her own needs and wants could be put aside for her children’s happiness and wellbeing. Based on her understanding of why she ‘chose’ to stay at home, Minju re-created her biographical path for the listener; in other words, she recalled her past to make her childcare and employment decision comprehensible for the interviewer as well as making her current situation more acceptable to herself.

In Minju’s case, despite the fact that she was geographically situated in England where she spent her life over the last 12 years, her understanding of life mainly came from her perceived Korean culture in which she and her husband both were raised and spent most of their lives. As a result, she suggested her putative cultural position played a significant part in her decision towards childcare and paid work. Her earlier account indicated how she gave up her work when she got married to follow the cultural custom of Korea. This is suggestive of clear gender segregation between men and women and the continuation of the traditional gender ‘norm’. In this milieu women with children (or in this particular context, women with a husband) are often expected to give up their work to care for them (see White 1987).

When all her children started to go to school full-time, Minju found a job as an administrator in a branch of a Korean company. At this stage in her story she indicated she believed taking full-time work would not have a negative impact on her children as they did not need her care all the time. Also, since her husband did not earn much money (her household income was less than £ 20,000 per year), it was financially better for her to work. But for her financial incentive was not the main motivation; meeting her children’s emotional needs was more important. Hence in her story, after two years, she stopped working again as she felt her absence had a detrimental effect on her children’s psychological security:

38: I’ve stopped working now because of childcare.

39: I went out at seven in the morning

- 40: and came back at seven in the evening (*I*: mm-hmm)
- 41: and it was hard for the children-
- 42: My children's confidence was diminished (*I*: mm).
- 43: (p) My children's characteristics were not like that.
- 44: But after I worked for about two years (*I*: mm)-
- 45: (p) my children's characteristics um (p) characteristics changed so much.
- 46: My children lost their confidence (*I*: mm-hmm) and (p) became a bit timid (*I*: mm),
- 47: so I just stopped working for my children (*I*: mm).
- 48: (p) Since I stopped (working) and started to pick them up,
- 49: my children have regained their confidence (*I*: mm-hmm)-
- 50: Mothers tend to think they can do many things they want to do for their children
- 51: if they work and have (p) extra money to spare (*I*: mm-hmm),
- 52: but I don't think that's certainly the case (*I*: mm).
- 53: The more important thing for children is mother's care,
- 54: the fact that their mum is present.
- 55: It seems very important for children that mum looks after them from morning till evening (*I*: uhh).

As the above narrative indicates, for Minju mothers were seen as the essential figure for children's wellbeing and happiness. However, despite this importance of mother's presence for children, in her previous job she "went out at seven in the morning and came back at seven in the evening"; she suggested that this had a harmful effect on her children's emotional security, undermining their confidence. According to her depiction, it did not matter whether it was quality time or not; what mattered was "mum looks after them from morning till evening"; in this depiction as long as mothers stayed at home, children were fine and vice versa. Since she stopped working, her children were portrayed as having "regained their confidence".

As a migrant woman Minju did not have relatives who she could rely on for childcare, other than her husband. However, as we examined in the previous chapter, Minju's household held the clearly gender divided understanding of roles within the family. Based

on this, her husband's participation in childcare and housework was very limited, and Minju was expected to take the majority of responsibilities as a wife and a mother. During the period Minju was employed, her husband who worked locally helped with certain aspects of childcare, for instance, taking them to school and picking them up. However, as Minju described in chapter 5, she saw his involvement as minimal and he was unable to fill the chasm of Minju's absence, especially in terms of the emotional needs of children. This suggests that there are two aspects of childcare, physical and psychological, and mother's love is represented as particularly linked to the latter. In this sense, even if the physical needs of children could be met by others, she is constructing their mother's absence as depriving them of their psychological needs.

Duncan and Edwards (1999) claimed that the primary factor determining mothers' behaviour towards the uptake of paid work is a socially and culturally negotiated idea about what is morally right and socially acceptable as a good and responsible mother. Thus, financial rationality is not the main motivation for mothers to work. These 'gendered moral rationalities' are also applicable to the mothers in my study. In particular, in Minju's case the household income was relatively low without her earning and they had three children. During the interview, she told me that she wanted to give her children opportunities to learn musical instruments but she could not do it because of financial strain. Nevertheless, for Minju economic incentives were not the driving force for her decision but instead what seemed to be most important for her children became the pivotal component as a mother. This highly gendered notion continued to dominate Minju's narrative:

56: *Int*: What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of a working mother are?

57: *Minju*: Because I have both experiences in working and staying at home,

58: Um (p) when I worked,

59: I (p) um felt a sense of achievement at work (*I*: mm-hmm)-

60: but I don't feel a sense of achievement at home (*I*: mm)

61: because I have to repeat the same thing again and again,

62: and nobody praises me for what I've done,

63: nobody praises me for doing washing up.

64: But, (p) when I went to work,

- 65: I felt a sense of achievement
 66: and I felt I was a respected person
 67: and I was also recognised as a capable person.
 68: On the contrary, at home (p) what I do is the same thing every day (chuckles),
 69: cooking meals, which nobody praises greatly
 70: so (p) housework is not fun to be honest (*I*: mm).
 71: Nonetheless, I don't think it's right for a mother to put her work first
 72: and try to deal with housework with money by sending her children to
Hakwons (private institutions which teach extracurricular subjects after school in
 Korea) (*I*: mm-hmm).
 73: because it means she doesn't do her job she is supposed to do.
 74: When you work, you get really tired after you come back home (*I*: Indeed).
 75: You just want to lie down...
 76: thus you can't care for your children (*I*: mm)...
 77: Even if uh it doesn't mean though that I do an awful lot of things for the
 children (*I*: mm-hmm),
 78: for the children my presence, I am very important for the children (*I*: mm-
 hmm).
 79: Mother is an extremely important position for children...

By starting her account saying “Because I have both experiences in working and staying at home”, Minju tried to persuade the listener her following statement was a “fact” or a “truth” based on experiences not just on personal opinion. “I have to repeat the same thing again and again” in line 61 and “the same thing every day” in line 68 emphasised the monotonous and dull characteristics of domestic chores, which “nobody praises”. Although Minju told the interviewer her personal story, public discourse around housework and paid employment is identifiable in this. For instance, the characteristics of housework Minju described – e.g. its taken-for-granted status and a lack of social recognition – are commonly found among the experiences of other housewives in Western culture as well as in East Asia where paid work is more valued than domestic labour (Crittenden 2001; Gang and Shin 2009). Moreover, the majority of housework responsibility often falls onto women's shoulders as suggested in many existing studies (e.g. West and Zimmerman 1987; Hochschild 1989; Mannino and Deutsch 2007; Kitterod and Pettersen 2009). Minju

had a clear awareness of this kind of different treatment and reception between housework and employment based on her experiences of both working and staying at home. Unlike the drudgery of domestic chores, paid work gave her “a sense of achievement”, respect and recognition. Nevertheless, for Minju looking after her children was her duty as a mother; that was what all mothers are “supposed to do”, rather than pursuing their own personal desires.

In line 72 she was again telling her story situated in the cultural context of Korea where one of the major responsibilities of mothers was to ensure the educational success of their children. This could involve supervising their children’s work themselves as well as organising extra private lessons for their children (see Cho 2002; Kim 2005). As seen in the previous chapter, this kind of mother’s role is noticeably different from the depiction of the role of a father who is expected to provide moral education and discipline for children rather than getting involved in the actual caring work. In this, the mother’s presence at home is important in making sure children do their work and follow their mother’s instructions. Therefore, working mothers were perceived to be unable to perform good mothering properly and had to rely on a substitute, such as private institutions [*Hakwons*].

She also told the interviewer working mothers cannot offer quality care for her children (“When you work, you get really tired after you come back home. You just want to lie down...thus you can’t care for your children”). In this account the incessant availability of a mother for their children was depicted as vital. Accordingly, the important thing was the mother’s presence at home “even if it doesn’t mean though that I do an awful lot of things for the children”.

6.1.1.3 Construction of the Future: ‘Resolving’ the Teller’s Problem

Since becoming a home-stay mother again, Minju had been looking for a part-time job in the local area where she lived. She hoped to find one eventually, which could fit into her childcare needs:

80: Uhh even if I worked, I would only work while my children were at school.

81: When they come home, it’s better for their mother to be at home-

82: So if I work, I would work part-time only when my children are at school (*I*: mm-hmm).

83: (p) I enjoy working very much (*I*: yeah), working makes me happy-

84: So I really want to work but also I want to be with my children all the time (*I*: mm).

85: Thus, the best thing I can combine both of them is working while my children are at school (*I*: mm).

In this narrative Minju attempts to ‘resolve’ her dilemma by coming up with a ‘solution’ that could combine paid employment and childcare, i.e. working part-time while her children are at school. In this sense Minju constructed her future founded upon her understanding of her past and present. It was her way of dealing with the moral dilemma she had as a mother who also wanted to work. Through this construction Minju also tried to tell us that ultimately she was a good mother to the extent that she gave up her work, which she enjoyed very much, for her children.

6.1.2 Narratives of Han

6.1.2.1 Han’s Story Before Marriage and Motherhood

The second set of narratives comes from the interview with Han, a stay-home mother in her late 30s with one child aged five. She came from South Korea to join her Korean husband who was working in London. At the time of the interview, she had lived in England for about five years. After studying at an educational college to be a teacher, Han achieved a Master’s degree in special education in Korea. Since completing her Master’s, she worked as a language specialist for children with learning difficulties at a research centre in a Korean university. Han felt her work was an inextricable part of her life and her identity, which would continue to provide the defining characteristics of herself:

01: Uhhh, I think my job was very special...

02: My undergraduate degree was general education...

03: but because I thought it would be good,

- 04: it would be great fun if I studied this (special education) (*I*: mm),
05: I changed my degree (p) when I started my Master's.
06: At that time, I felt that I made a very good choice
07: and I couldn't separate it from my life (*I*: mm-hmm)...
08: I thought I'd made an excellent decision and I would always do the job...

From this extract, pride and a sense of contentment that Han felt from her occupation was noticeable ("my job was very special"/"I made a very good choice"/"I'd made an excellent decision"/"I would always do the job"). In addition, her statement in line 07 "I couldn't separate it from my life" suggests the vitality of her work in defining who she was. Not surprisingly, she was highly ambitious in her career and believed that she would reach the top in her field:

- 09: When I believed I would carry on studying and would not stop working,
10: I also thought I would do my PhD here (in Britain) (*I*: mm-hmm)...
11: I dreamt that I could become a very successful case.
12: (p) I wanted to study further,
13: and I wanted to be the one who did the most extensive research
14: by combining my experience in the field and knowledge (*I*: mm).

From these two sets of narrative it appears that her worker identity was dominant over her other identities, such as ethnicity and gender, at this stage of her life. The intersection between her identity as a single middle-class professional living in Korea meant that her worker identity came to the fore, submerging her other identities (Skinner 2011) - for instance, as a Korean living in Korea her ethnicity was almost taken for granted and her gender identity was also less visible here. However, as the use of modal auxiliary verb in lines 09-11 ("I would carry on"/"I would do"/"I could become") indicates, her dream of becoming a highly respected expert in special education remained unachieved. This was a result of her projected career path being disrupted by her marriage, subsequent pregnancy and move to England.

6.1.2.2 After Marriage and Motherhood

When Han got married in Korea, her employment status shifted from full-time to part-time. Here is Han's version of why she changed her working hours:

- 15: After I got married, I reduced working hours suddenly-
16: because my father-in-law (p) doesn't like his daughters-in-law to work outside.
17: But, ironically, my mother-in-law had worked until we got married (*I: mm*)
18: and my father-in-law wasn't happy with it (*I: ah*).
19: He wished his wife had looked after her children at home (*I: ah*).
20: So my father-in-law (p) said to me and my brother-in-law's wife
21: when we got married that he wanted us not to work and stay at home
22: looking after the household, living on what his sons earned (*I: mm*).
23: To be honest, I didn't like it...
24: My parents thought what he said was nonsense
25: because they supported my education until I became 30.
26: Nonetheless, what can I do?
27: Because I had to show that at least I made an effort to my father-in-law,
28: I reduced working hours at the beginning of my marriage
29: with the intention to go back to full-time later...

This narrative, albeit personal, discloses the social and cultural milieu of South Korea in which the story is situated. In this story Confucian patriarchal norms are still seen to be influential in South Korea where married women are still expected to perform their obligation as a caring wife and an obedient daughter-in-law despite some improvement in gender issues and a recent increase in married women's participation in the labour markets (see Sung 2003; Won and Pascall 2004). At the same time, it indicates the unequal power and gender relations not only between her father-in-law and herself, but also between the groom's family and the bride's in general. For instance, in lines 24-25 her parents "thought what he said was nonsense" because "they supported her education until she became 30" so she could have a professional career; nevertheless, they did not seem to fight for their belief; instead, Han ended up partly obeying her father-in-law's request by changing to part-time even though she did not agree with what he said. Previous research indicates that

traditionally, in Confucian patriarchal society, such as Korea, the groom's parents enjoy more power than the bride's as males are considered to be higher than females in the 'natural' hierarchy; and women are also regarded as belonging to their husbands' family once they get married (Sung 2003). Hence, as can be seen in this excerpt Han's father-in-law as a head of the family exerted his authority over her. Whilst Han "didn't like" what her father-in-law said, she portrayed herself as an almost powerless subject who did not have much choice but to follow his words ("What can I do?" / "I had to show that at least I made an effort to my father-in-law"). However, at the same time she resisted her father-in-law's demand to some extent by opting for part-time employment instead of quitting her job completely, together with her intention to return to full-time work later even if it was currently unfulfilled. Additionally, in another part of the interview she showed a clear awareness of gender inequality and injustice. For example, we saw in chapter 5 she resisted the gendered division of housework within her family by requesting her husband's contribution to childcare. Yet, simultaneously she supported the idealised notion of a father who retained the untarnished image of a moral authority. This ambivalence in a sense is consistent with Han's accounts here: she knew it was unfair but believed that she needed to compromise by going part-time and show respect for her father-in-law's authority to some degree. This illuminates the perpetuation of gender norms and how her individual agency interplayed with the social and cultural forces of Korea, affecting the construction of her identity.

As can be seen from the above narrative, since her marriage in Korea, her gender identity became dominant, which forces women to perform gender segregated roles in Confucian patriarchal society: its interaction with her class position and employment meant the weakening position of her worker identity as a result of the reinforcement of her identity as a married woman in a Korean middle-class family. This apparent change in her identity continued as her employment status changed once more when she became pregnant with her child, in conjunction with the prospect of coming to England. At the beginning of her pregnancy, Han completely quit her job in order to concentrate on motherhood. Instead of accompanying her husband, she decided to remain in Korea until her delivery. During this period she was engrossed in the performance of 'good' mothering by attending various classes for pregnant women, such as yoga, knitting and making toys. According to Han, this is common practice among middle- and upper-class women in Korea, where an

intensive mothering ideology is dominant. In addition, as Han's narrative indicates, the practices of intensive mothering begin even before babies are born. Hence, many expectant mothers were said to engage in a varied array of classes and sessions, which were thought to be beneficial for the development of babies:

30: To be honest, in Korea it's [the way women are involved in mothering practices] very exceptional

31: even when the baby is in the womb (*I: mm*) (*I chuckle*)...

32: When women become pregnant,

33: they learn a lot for *taegyo* [a Korean word for fetal education].

34: Because it's known to be good for the development of a baby to use hands,

35: there are many classes for knitting, sewing or making toys (*I: ah-ha*).

36: Or there are all sorts of free or paid classes for educating pregnant women (*I: ah*)

37: or preparing for the birth like breastfeeding (*I: mm-hmm*),

38: organised by hospitals or some companies related to childcare.

39: I also attended them a lot (*I: mm*)...

This narrative also underscores the powerful imagery of 'good' mothering in Korea, which has significant implications for the intensification of the gendered norms. In addition, this culture had the perpetuating influence on Han's identity and practices of mothering even outside Korea. In this context, her identity as a language specialist appears to become diluted by her strong identity as a mother. Like many other women in Korea (see Kim 2005) as well as Minju, Han espoused an intensive mothering ideology for the healthy development of a child:

40: In fact, it's not easy to leave my child (p) to someone else's hands.

41: In my case as well, because of the work itself I did before marriage,

42: because I saw so many wrong instances.

43: There are many cases

44: that frequent changes in carers can cause a severe emotional disturbance for children (*I: mm-hmm*).

45: Especially in Korea there are many cases where carers change often.

46: There are many instances in which sometimes grandma takes the role of carer,
47: other times mum (*I*: mm-hmm), which is very bad for children.
48: So in my case when I worked,
49: I always thought I should care for my child,
50: at least for a few years when he was a baby.

Here Han deployed her position as a language specialist who held expert knowledge in constructing her version of why she chose to look after her child herself. By using the example of her work experience (lines 41-44), she claimed that “there are many cases that frequent changes in carers can cause a severe emotional disturbance for children” and thus there needed to be someone who could provide “uninterrupted care”. Interestingly though, in this narrative there was no mention about a father or other male carer; it was either a mother or a grandmother. In this set of narrative Han came to the conclusion that she should be the one who looked after her child. In the following account Han explained why the mother was the ideal carer for her child:

51: In Korea if young mothers work,
52: there aren't many suitable places to leave children.
53: It's too expensive to leave somewhere and the quality is not good, either.
54: So there are many cases a grandma mainly looks after a child.
55: But grandmas tend to look after the child in an easy way,
56: either showing TV or video (*I*: mm-hmm).
57: When the child is looked after rather carelessly,
58: if the child has potential mental weaknesses, (*I*: mm)
59: because it can have a serious effect
60: on the development of their language, social ability or even intelligence,
61: I thought that I shouldn't do this [leaving her child to his grandmother],
62: even if I showed TV or video, it was better for me to explain it to him...

Here the mother was portrayed as the best carer who could provide the best quality of care for her children, ensuring their healthy development. Again Han continued to employ her position as a specialist in this construct in order to enhance the validity of her claim (especially in line 57-60). For Han who engaged in ‘good’ mothering practices even before

her son was born just the unceasing presence of the mother was not good enough. In this sense, an intensive mothering ideology did not just entail being there for her child 24 hours a day, as seen in the case of Minju but also being actively involved in activities which could maximise the child's emotional, intellectual and social ability. This might be the result of Han having received higher and more specialised education in terms of language development as well as having more financial and temporal resources than Minju. For instance, Han's household income was over £ 80,000 per year and they had only one child, which meant in reality she was able to spend more time and money on her child than Minju, and thus enabled her to engage in what Vincent et al. (2004) called 'professional mothering'. This might have affected the construction of their accounts to some extent as tellers often try to justify their positions in their narratives (Ginsburg 1989; Riessman 1990).

6.1.2.3 After Migration

This kind of belief in the significance of the mother's role in childcare had a crucial bearing on her decision towards childcare and employment, even after she moved to England. Three months after giving birth to her son, Han came to England in order to join her husband. Based on her belief that the mother's care was the best for the successful growth of her child, Han decided to stay at home looking after her child even if she could have worked if she really wanted to:

- 63: Of course if I look for opportunities, at least as a volunteer
- 64: I could work even here with children similar to those I used to see.
- 65: There must be many facilities like that (*I: mm-hmm*).
- 66: However, my English isn't very good.
- 67: My English isn't good enough to communicate with
- 68: and help people in this country.
- 69: Nonetheless, if I try to find a job, I can,
- 70: but first of all because I have a baby, it's not easy
- 71: and I had to put my baby to somewhere during that time (*I: mm*)...

As she explained in the previous narrative, she did not want to leave her child with someone else. It was important for her to be there for him at least during the early important developmental stage of his life. Whilst her motherhood convictions played a pivotal role in her decision towards her work and childcare, her awareness of her limited English skills also seemed to contribute to her decision to some degree. In this sense, Han's ethnic identity as a minority woman with English as her second language became noticeable here, interplaying with her motherhood identity. Meanwhile, despite her own decision to devote herself to the performance of 'good' mothering, loss of her worker identity was not easy for her, particularly at the beginning of motherhood:

- 72: It's better now as my kid has grown a bit,
73: but, at the beginning when my kid was younger,
74: I partly felt my life was a little bit encroached.
75: when the baby required my help constantly,
76: when I really had to hold him, cuddle him and feed him,
77: ah I was really, if I was a person who didn't do anything [before motherhood]
78: and believed my life was all about getting married and having children,
79: I would think of it as my job and wouldn't feel unfair.
80: In fact I was educated as much and I had a job,
81: and I had something that I had invested and honed. (*I: mm-hmm*)
82: But, even though I had been prepared mentally,
83: a sense of loss was big after giving up my work,
84: feeling like I've lost everything I've invested and honed for a long time at once
85: due to my baby, especially at the beginning when the baby was very young.
86: Because I had to invest, no not investing,
87: really had to consume 24 hours for my child (*I: mm*),
88: even I had to wake up in the middle of sleep,
89: it felt like my child took away all my time (*I: mm-hmm*)
90: and I, what shall I say, (p) looked incompetent (*I: mm*).
91: Although I forced myself to believe I was doing an important job
92: but it was a simple task really.
93: There is nothing good about it in terms of quality (chuckles) (*I: mm*),
94: nappy changing, feeding, bathing, anybody can do them (*I: yes*).

- 95: In fact, in some ways it doesn't have to be me
 96: but somebody can do the job (*I: mm*).
 97: Yet because he is my child and I'm his parent,
 98: because I'm his mum, I had to stop my job for my child.
 99: Passing my time like this,
 100: I feel like what I have achieved so far is (p) flown away all at once.
 101: Such a sense of loss is relatively big as much as a sense of achievement (*I: mm*).

Similar to Minju, Han had an acute awareness of the tedious nature of housework, which did not offer an interesting challenge and social recognition. Household labour was seen as an unskilled "simple task" that "anybody can do", contrasting with her specialist profession, which only few qualified people could do. Consonant with Minju, despite her strong desire to work and her sense of loss, Han's sense of duty as a mother was visible in lines 97-98 ("because he is my child"/ "because I'm his parent"/ "because I'm his mum"/ "I had to stop my job for my child"). This also confirms the powerful influence of the motherhood ideology Han held, which was centred around children's needs.

6.1.2.4 Construction of the Future: 'Resolving' the Teller's Problem

Notwithstanding her ambivalent feelings at the beginning of motherhood, Han's story ended positively. Like other women who I interviewed, Han travelled through different phases of her life. Over the years of her life in England, she made a group of mother friends with whom she found a different kind of joy. Also, her child began school full-time, which allowed her to do something for her future. Once her child reaches a certain age, Han intends to return to work. Han was even considering giving up her profession altogether to start a new career:

- 102: Since I lived here (in England),
 103: I realised that whilst the job I did was interesting (p) (*I: mm-hmm*),
 104: there are also many interesting areas I can learn in this country (*I: mm-hmm*).
 105: First of all, I can learn English
 106: (p) and I begin to think I can have a new life

107: while being contented with my previous work as it was (*I*: mm-hmm).

108: If I were in Korea, I never thought like that (*I*: indeed)

109: and continued to do the same job-.

110: I've realised since I lived here that there are many interesting things to learn...

111: So I've been taking florist courses these days (*I*: ahh)...

While she expressed certain regret and a sense of loss since motherhood, Han now focused on the prospect of a new job in the future. Like Minju, rather than holding onto her past and being drowned by it, Han actively engaged in constructing her future, turning her lost ground into a new opportunity. In re-creating her biographical path, Han came up with an answer, which enabled her to bridge disjunctives in her life. However, simultaneously Han's accounts differed from Minju's: whilst Minju tried to find a part-time job that could bring extra income for the family as well as fitting into her childcare needs, Han did not seem concerned about such issues. Indeed, lines 110/111 evidently indicate her position as a relatively affluent middle-class woman who could invest her time and money on her interest areas, unlike those with limited resources.

6.1.3 Narratives: Construction of the Past, Present and Future

As seen in the above examples, for these women becoming a 'stay-at-home' mother was not always the planned event. Through their narratives these mothers tried to make sense of their past, present and future; and tell the listener why she made the decision to stay at home and how right it was for their children. In this process of telling their life stories disjunctives in their employment due to motherhood were used as a cue to refashion their identity (Gabriel et al. 2010). In addition, individual women's journey through motherhood and employment does not appear to have been a linear process. Since many women chose to stay at home while their children were young, their employment pattern also shifted over the years as their children became older: for instance, Minju stayed at home while her children were young and then worked for two years when they began full-time schooling; however, she stopped working again due to her concern with her children's emotional security. Also, in interaction with varied factors women's identity appears to have shifted depending on contexts. For example, Han and Minju portrayed themselves as having a

strong worker identity before marriage and having children. However, in their stories their identities changed once they had children as well as after their moves to England.

Meanwhile, there were a range of differences between Minju and Han: for example, the length of stay in England; reasons for coming to England; the country where they had their children; the number of children; and their financial situations. Among these, the number of children and financial factors seemed to have some level of interconnected influence on their experiences as Han's narratives were suggestive of having more opportunities and resources for finding her own identity than Minju's. Also, the two women held different concepts of an intensive mothering ideology. Han's talk supported rather 'professional mothering' practices, compared to Minju's account of the importance of simply being there for her children. This could possibly be linked to their differences in terms of education and financial situations, as I suggested previously.

However, concurrently their narratives showed a lot of commonalities, despite divergence in their biographical backgrounds. For instance, both of them continued to employ their perceived cultural heritage as a way of legitimising their decision towards work and childcare despite their location in England. Also, what strongly emerged was an intensive mothering ideology individual women held in determining their employment status, irrespective of their divergent understandings of the concept. They both believed that children of a young age needed intensive care from a *mother* in order to ensure their healthy growth. In addition, the narratives of both women indicated their gendered notion of the role division within the family, seeing childcare as their duty. In these accounts fathers or other male carers were completely absent. This seems to suggest the interplay of 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity' in the lives of these two East Asian migrant women in England. However, they were also acutely aware of the unrewarding characteristics of domestic work and being a housewife in society. On top of this, for Han transition to motherhood brought a sense of loss and a certain degree of resentment coming from the loss of her worker identity. Yet, despite the emotional setbacks these two women encountered, they did not stop from devoting their time and energy to their dependent children. The stories these two women told showed a striking similarity to the discourse of many other home-stay mothers presented below.

6.2 Discourse of Home-stay Mothers

6.2.1 The Perceived 'Irreplaceable' Importance of the Mother's Care for Young Children

The dominant theme that emerged from the talk of home-stay mothers was the salience of the mother's care for the emotional security of young children. In this discourse mother's absence was portrayed as having a damaging effect on the healthy development of young children. This was evidently demonstrated in the talk of Seyoun, a mother from Korea in her late 30s with two children aged eight and six. She originally came to England with her Korean husband who was an expatriate of a government organisation. At the time of the interview Seyoun had lived in England for less than three years. Both of her children were born in South Korea. After completing a Master's degree, she worked as a primary school teacher in Korea with a promising future ahead. However, since becoming a mother, her employment status changed over the years: she had six years off from work after having children; then she briefly returned to work when her youngest child began nursery full-time; but she stopped working again when she came to England. In this decision towards her employment status her motherhood ideology seemed to play a significant part:

When they need care, when they need mothers (*I: mm-hmm*), if they don't have (mothers), they are psychologically unstable definitely (*I: mm*), especially when they are in a lower level (*I: mm*), when they are younger. For me when the child is young, it seems better for mothers not to have a job (*I: mm-hmm*)...When the child is young, when the mother is needed, it's better to be with them (*I: mm-hmm*)...

In this talk mother's absence for young children was described as causing psychological instability. Therefore, working mothers of young children were depicted as being a potential danger to their children's emotional security. In this account the presence of the mother was represented as an essential ingredient for healthy growth of children.

This sentiment was again echoed in the talk of Asuko, a Japanese mother in her 40s, with

two children aged four and eight, who had lived in England for 11 years. Asuko worked as a computer engineer in Japan when she was 20, just after graduating from a college. While she was working in Japan, she met her British husband. A few years later Asuko got married to her husband and moved to England. When she came to England, Asuko started working in a Japanese company as a computer engineer. Two and a half years later she became pregnant with their first child. Before giving birth to the baby, her story suggested that she always thought she would work even if she had children. She went on to say that considering their financial situation it seemed right to continue working. However, once she gave birth to her child, she indicated her mind changed completely and she stayed at home looking after their children. Motherhood also appears to have brought on a complete shift in her perception of 'stay-at-home' mothers:

Asuko: Um uhhhhhhhhh before I had the children, bringing up children was easy I thought and all mothers should work (chuckles), all mothers should have jobs, and all the (P) full-time mothers are lazy, I thought (*I:* mm) (chuckles). But, it's so hard and it's so important to be with children and um staying at home is, um I can say, boring but-(p)

Int: Why do you think being with them is important?

Asuko: (p) Because they need, they need love from, real big love from the mother not just uh (p) if they're looked after by child-minders or even grandmother, it's not enough, I think (*I:* mm-hmm). They really um (p) it's the first thing you're needed by someone so much. (p) If I leave this baby, she will die. (p) Maybe she can survive if somebody gives her milk or warmth and change nappies but that's, that's not good enough, I think.

In this extract the mother's love and care were portrayed as crucial for children's lives, as something that cannot be replaced by others. Interestingly, fathers did not seem to be in the same league to mothers in this regard. She initially indicated that the absence of the mother or the mother's care was the determinant for the child's life or death. Her account then implied that the physical survival of a child was not sufficient for the genuine quality of his/her life. In her story what determined the actual quality of life was the mother's love; without it the baby was akin to being dead, even though he/she might have survived physically. Thus, a mother's love and care was constructed as an essential constituent for a

child's happy and secure life; and the mother was positioned as the individual who should stay at home looking after their children even if it was "boring". Mirroring this, Asuko's depiction of working mothers was rather critical:

...It's not nice to see their children only evenings and early in the mornings, just weekends (*I: mm*). It's not good enough. (p) But some people of course have no choice. They have to work and I can understand it. (p) There are some families they have a nice house, a nice car and lots of holidays like that. It looks like their mothers work for that and then children feel um (p) children must be lonely or feel sad about it, I think, even though they don't say that.

This excerpt indicates that mothers of young children should not work unless it is financially necessary. It also suggests that working mothers cannot provide sufficient care and love for their children, other than financially. As a result, the children of employed mothers were depicted as likely to be unhappy and have emotional problems. In this construction Asuko distanced herself from working mothers. All these contributions seem to suggest that what matters to children is the unceasing availability of their mother; in this regard, it is not about quality time but the quantity of time mothers spend with their children.

This emphasis on the vitality of the mother's presence and 'othering' of working mothers was also echoed in the account of Heji, a Korean mother in her early 40s with two children aged five and one. After working as a nurse for a few years, Heji began her job in a voluntary organisation involved in helping local communities in Korea, which she felt extremely passionate about. Since this sort of work was a newly developed area in Korea, she felt she needed new knowledge and skills. As a result, she came to England ten years ago to study her Master's degree with the intention to return to the same workplace once she completed her study. However, during her Master's she met her Korean husband and became pregnant. After finishing her degree, she gave birth to her first child and stayed at home. Despite her strong identification with her work, and intention to continue working after her studies, Heji decided to stay at home looking after her children. One major decisive factor was her belief in the importance of a mother's care when her children were young:

So far I've just wanted to raise my children while they're young (*I: mm*), maybe until ten because I think this is the most important period (for children) (*I: mm*). So for ten years I would like to concentrate on household labour (*I: mm-hmm*)...

Her talk is suggestive of the importance of mother's intensive care during "the most important period" of her children's life. Although she did not directly mention about the significance of mother's care for the psychological wellbeing of young children in this extract, in other interview extracts she talked about how important the mother's role was during the period when young children built their characters. In addition, for Heji employed mothers were seen as not being able to look after their children properly, consistent with Asuko's account:

Working mums can be (p) a bit neglectful of their children. Busy mums are (p) likely to have no time to look after their children, aren't they? (*I: mm-hmm*) (p) Looking at my eldest sister, (p) because my eldest sister works, she has a sense of compensation towards her child because she can't look after her child herself (*I: mm-hmm*). So with the money she earns she constantly sends her child to *Hakwons* and piano lessons. But her child didn't like *Hakwons* (p) so didn't go, and she went about "Why don't you go?" like that (*I chuckle*). So in a psychological aspect as well...because of lack of time to spend with children, it is likely to be difficult in terms of building a sense of bond (between mother and child)...

In this construction Heji sought consent or assurance from the interviewer by using the tag question ("Busy mums are (p) likely to have no time to look after their children, **aren't they?**" [my emphasis]). She appeared to be conscious of the interviewer who was not a full-time housewife unlike herself and thus turned her statement into a question in order to try to formulate a consensual view with the listener.

By deploying the example of her eldest sister who worked full-time, Heji's talk suggested that working mothers could not provide quality care for their children unlike stay-home mothers. In order to make up for their absence, she suggested employed mothers would use monetary substitutes such as *Hakwons*, which could not beat the quality of mothers' care.

Accordingly, a mother's absence was indicated to have a psychologically damaging effect on children as well as having a negative impact on the relationship between the mother and the child due to time restrictions. Interestingly though, again the father's absence due to his employment was not questioned at all as problematic for the children and for the establishment of a close relationship between father and children. Consonant with Minju, her talk was produced in the cultural context of Korea where one of the main aspects of 'good' mothering was represented as making sure of the educational success of their children. According to Heji's portrayal, because working mothers could not oversee their children's study, they would rely on privately funded institutions like her sister. Again her account is reminiscent of the 'othering' of working mothers in their home country as well as those who share the same cultural background as themselves in England, identified in the talk of Asuko.

6.2.2 'That's What Mothers Are Supposed to Do'

Parallel with an intensive mothering ideology founded on gendered understanding, talk of some home-stay mothers described childcare as a mother's duty:

Int: If you were not alone here, but had your mother-in-law or mother, someone who could help you with childcare, what would you have done in terms of work?

Heji: ...I don't think I would work this time [when my children are young].

Int: Could you give me a reason?

Heji: At first after I had my first one, I said I wasn't going to have another one and my mother-in-law said "if you go ahead, I will raise them." (*I* chuckle) So I said it to my husband and he said "What? Children should be raised by mothers, not by grandmothers." (chuckles) (*I:* mm)-Of course, mothers-in-law and grandmothers raise children well because of their experiences, on the other hand, (p) I have a sense of duty (*I:* mm).

Reflecting her earlier discourse, a clear gender notion appears to be dominant in this extract. Here women's role as a carer was treated as unquestionable: for example, mothers-in-law, grandmothers and mothers were only mentioned in this story, exempting any men from this. In addition, Heji's husband's firm response indicates the manifestation of

‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘emphasised femininity’, and his gender biased belief ruling over the dynamics of their relationships. Heji also described her caring role as her duty. This echoes Confucian principles which emphasise the importance of individual fulfillment of duty as a husband, a wife, parents, children: Heji as a mother was represented as having the duty to look after children while her husband provided financial security for the family.

Consistent with this, the account of Mai, a mother from Japan in her mid-40s with four children aged 14, 13, 12 and eight, displayed a strong sense of the duty mothers have for their children. Mai originally came to England to study 20 years ago and obtained a computer-related degree. During this period, she met her British husband and got married. Since her marriage, Mai had stayed at home concentrating on raising her children. For Mai every mother, regardless of her nationality or ethnicity, had a duty of childcare:

I think obviously any mother, it doesn't matter whether it's a Western mother or Asian, anybody has to really go into it (*I: mm*), y'know really go into it (*p*) because you need everyday care (*I: mm*). So you have to think about your child first (*p*) (*I: mm*). You don't think yourself you know (chuckles), just think of your children first (*I: OK*).

According to Mai's accounts, all mothers should prioritise their children's needs and should not place their own needs and wants before their children's. Mai's use of “y'know/you know” suggests her appeal to the interviewer to understand that her statements were the “truth”. Thus, all mothers “must” devote themselves fully to looking after their children, which meant their constant presence and availability. In effect, there is no room for mothers of young children to combine childcare and employment here.

Similar to Mai, Mijung, a Korean mother in her early 30s with two children aged seven and four, believed that it was her duty as a mother to be physically present and available for her children. Mijung was in her final year at a college of education to become a teacher at secondary school level in Korea when she was introduced to her Korean husband who was studying in Britain at that time. After a few months of their dating period, she got married and came to Britain nine years ago to join her husband who was still a student. After a couple of years of happy life as a newly married couple, she became pregnant with her first

child and then the second one followed three years later. Since she got married, she gave up her plan to be a teacher and stayed at home looking after her husband and her two children:

I just think it's natural for me to look after my children with my position as a mother (*I: mm-hmm*). It doesn't mean though I'm completely obsessed with my children while raising them because I just care about the children. In the past, 100% of my attention was on their dad. It was a situation where I could give all, all the attention to my husband. But, since our child was born, naturally my attention goes to the child...I believe I should do my share for my children as much as I can while I bring them up (*I: mm*)...So even though I work in the future, I don't want to do a nine-to-five office job while my children grow (*I: mm*).

In Mijung's story it was presented as the order of things in life that she took care of the family; it was her duty as a wife and a mother – clear evidence of her espousal of 'emphasised femininity'. That was why she spent her first couple of years of marriage looking after her husband, giving him 100 per cent attention. Since their children were born, her story indicates that all her attention had been onto her two young children. She appeared to believe that was what she had to do as a mother without asking for any return from her children. As a mother, she saw it as her "share" to commit herself to her children and their wellbeing. Thus, she seemed to want to make sure she was there for her children until they became completely independent from her.

As presented so far, the discourse around mother's presence and care dominated in the talk of mothers with Korean and Japanese heritage, but it was not so in the women I interviewed who were of Chinese origin. Reflecting this, the accounts of two home-stay mothers from mainland China, Fang and Bian, were rather divergent from the above mothers. As explained in chapter 5, Fang was a mother of one child who migrated into England with her husband for their daughter's education about a year ago. At the time of the interview Fang, who had continued to work in China when her daughter was born, was actively seeking a job in England. However, her limited English skills were hampering her from getting a job at the time of the interview. While she said her family was the most important thing in her life, she also said "my job was very important for my life." Also, she

gave the following account of the merits of working:

I like working. If I work, I can meet different people (*I*: mm-hmm). If I don't feel happy at home, I can go to work, talk to people and forget about it. But if I stay at home, every time I don't feel very happy, I think about it for a long time (*I*: OK). I feel gloomy everyday...

As can be seen from this, for Fang paid work outside the home was seen as offering opportunities for social interaction and releasing any unhappy feelings arising from home. In this, Fang did not suggest that mothers should stay home all day in order to establish emotional security for their children. Bian's account also echoed a similar position to Fang's. Bian worked as a sales representative in a large company in China after completing her university degree. While working in China, she met her British husband and came to England seven years ago. Since then, Bian worked as a shop assistant and continued working part-time after having her two children, but in her story she decided to give it up because of the following reasons:

I tried to work [after having my two children], but when I went to work (*I*: mm-hmm), I couldn't see them so I missed them very much, and uh also it made me really busy. It was so busy because I had two yeah two boys (*I*: OK). All my friends have girls (*I*: mm-hmm). It's very different to have a boy or a girl (*I*: OK). Boys, especially my boys are really lively. The girls are quite different, they're calm so yeah for me it's making me even busier (*I*: all right)...

In this talk Bian constructed her main reasons for not working in terms of having two boys who demanded a lot of her energy and involvement, in conjunction with her desire to be with them. Interestingly, she made comparison with her friends, most of whom had daughters. Some of the friends Bian was referring to were in fact employed mothers from China. So for Bian if she had daughters, who seemed to require a lot less time and energy of a mother or a carer, continuing her employment was potentially a possibility. This seems to suggest that there is a gendered understanding not just of who should mother here but also who is easier to care for.

6.2.3 The Mother's Thoughts on the Impact of Not Working: What It Means to Be a Home-stay Mother for East Asian Women

6.2.3.1 Impact on Their Perception of Future Employment

Whilst the majority of stay-home mothers expressed their joy and happiness at having children, their talk also illustrated the potential negative impact of giving up work. One of the major effects that dominated their stories was their reduced confidence in future employability. All these women, except one, intended to return to work once their children reached a certain age. Indeed, as was indicated previously, this was one of the ways that many women tried to reconcile themselves to their current situation. However, many of them had concerns about their later employment, having been out of the labour market for many years. For instance, Asuko who had not worked since having children planned to start working part-time once her youngest child started school. Yet, she was not sure whether she would be able to find a job which fitted around her childcare needs:

I think it's very hard for me to find a new job (*I: mm*). I don't think I can do a good job (*p*) and especially it's because not many jobs are available, and I have a big gap and then I still don't want to work full-time because I have to take children to school (*I: mm*) and pick up children (*I: mm*). And they have a lot of holidays too (*I: yes*) so it should be part-time work. (*p*) Then I don't know what I can do. Maybe I can't choose and have to accept anything.

In this extract a number of factors were mentioned, which could affect her future employment. Alongside the big gap in her labour market participation, her desire to work part-time, which would enable her to combine this with childcare, could make her job search even more difficult. This might force her to “accept anything” without much choice. This reduced level of confidence was also identified in the talk of Kyoko, a mother from Japan with two children aged ten and five:

Now I haven't been working for so long (*I: mm*), make ten years (*I: mm*), so I'm a

bit worried about it. It might be difficult (p) to get a job now (*I*: OK).

After completing her degree, Kyoko worked as an editor of a small publishing company in Japan. Then she came to England as a language student 15 years ago and met her British husband. After her marriage, Kyoko worked in a Japanese company. However, since having her two children, Kyoko stopped working completely. Despite her work record not only in Japan but also in England, her diminished confidence was marked in her account.

A similar pattern also emerged in the talk of Hailey, a mother from Hong Kong with two children. After working as an administrator for many years in Hong Kong, Hailey came to Britain to study a degree in fashion 16 years ago. When she finished her study, Hailey chose marriage instead of pursuing her career in the fashion industry. Since then, she had been staying at home focusing on bringing up her two children. A weakened confidence in her ability to find a job is illuminated in the following account:

I feel more and more difficult to go back to work now (p) because it's been nearly more than ten years (*I*: mm), yeah, more than ten years after I finished my study (*I*: mm). It's a lack of confidence (*I*: OK) to go back to work (*I*: all right) even though I got my certificate, but I still feel (p) less confident.

As seen in these examples, having a big gap in their employment owing to motherhood was thought to have significant implications for full-time mothers. Despite their high qualifications and their previous experiences in the labour market, disengagement from it for a lengthy period of time undermined these mothers' confidence to a considerable degree.

6.2.3.2 Impact of Giving up Paid Work on the Way They Felt about Themselves

In conjunction with its impact on their perception of future employability, having disengaged in economic activity for a while also seemed to affect home-stay mothers' self-identity and self-value. This appears to be especially the case for mothers who used to have a job or a career they had enjoyed before having children. Bian who worked in a big

company as a sales person in Shanghai felt a loss of identity after staying at home full-time:

...Since I had children, you just lose yourself, you know, your hobby or your career, everything. Sometimes I must say that, a little bit (*I*: mm)...I was a bit upset, you know, like that.

In other parts of the interview Bian expressed her joy of having children and seeing them growing. Yet, like many other home-stay mothers she also felt her own identity disappeared as a result of motherhood. Consistent with this, for a woman like Heji who came to England to achieve a higher qualification for her career, unexpected motherhood meant disturbance to her future plan:

Int: In what ways has having children affected your life?

Heji: Um the first one (p) in the past (p), when it wasn't planned, I thought it had a very adverse effect on my life (laughs) (*I*: mm). Because I had to give up everything I'd planned, I felt very depressed - during my pregnancy as well as (*I*: mm), the first one (*I*: yeah), for two years, for one or two years after delivering the baby, (p) I felt that way a lot. I promised people in Korea [people at work] I would certainly be back (*I*: mm-hmm), but I couldn't keep that promise. Also I studied [in Britain] because I wanted to work more, but, somewhat, at that time I felt that, because I was shackled by it (chuckles), I was forced to settle down here [in England]. So at the beginning I found it very hard, when I had the first one.

Before coming to terms with her new identity, Heji had to struggle with her loss of worker identity. Similar to Han's narrative in the previous section, there was a discernible sense of loss and resentment in her story, originating from not being able to pursue what she had worked for and what she had "promised" her colleagues. Also, staying put in England as a result of having children was not something she cherished at the beginning but felt "shackled by it", curtailing her opportunity to return to the workplace.

The account of Sook, another mother in her mid-30s from Korea with one child aged four, revealed lowly feelings some home-stay mothers might experience. Before having her

daughter, Sook, a university graduate, used to work in cafes as well as helping the business of her British husband, who she met during her time as a language student in England. However, since having her daughter, Sook stopped working and stayed home full-time. In the following extract the depression Sook felt as a result of isolation originating from staying home full-time was notable:

Int: How do you think not working has affected the way you feel about yourself?

Sook: ...Now my friends are very busy. I don't know (P) I just feel depressed. I feel like I'm just (P) not precious. (p) I've become miserable (a bit tearful).

Int: Why do you think like that? (with tears in her eyes)

Sook: I feel that way because I'm not working...I've had a bit of depression (I: mm). It was worse last year. But, it's not because I want to see my family [in Korea] and I think I should do some work. I think if I work, it would help...Whether it's part-time or full-time, I can meet people. (p) But in my current situation all my friends work and I have no friends who can listen to me. If I ring them, they say they're busy so they can't listen to what I say. (p) I plan to work in the near future once my daughter goes to school full-time...

From Sook's talk the sense of loneliness and isolation she felt was marked ("all my friends work, I have no friends who can listen to me"/ "they're busy so they can't listen to what I say"), along with the low self-worth she felt about herself ("I feel like I'm just not precious"). In this talk there were a couple of long pauses, which indicate that a very sensitive, hard to talk about topic would follow, in this instance it was her depression.

According to Sook's account, lack of social interaction with other people caused her depression. Particularly, having all her friends working aggravated the situation. Sook was aware that work could help her depression but despite that, she chose not to work until her daughter "goes to school full-time". In the previous chapter, Sook's talk clearly stated her belief in the paramount importance of the mother for children. Given this, it was not surprising that she insisted on staying at home notwithstanding her emotional lowliness.

Consistent with this, Jina, a Korean mother of two children aged nine and three who came to England with her expatriate husband three years ago, expressed the diminished self-

esteem she experienced since motherhood. Jina used to work in a big international company in Korea before having children, earning a higher salary than her husband. Nonetheless, since becoming a mother, she stopped working, which she suggests brought the loss of a certain degree of respect from her husband and her self-esteem:

Uh (P) what shall I say, normally people who stay at home, I'm also a bit like that, there are many times when your self-esteem gets hurt very much (*I*: mm) living by relying on your husband's money (*I*: yeah I can understand). When I earned, at that time my annual salary was higher than my husband (*I*: mm-hmm). As a result, (p) shall I say that I was proud? (*I*: mm). It was very nice (*I*: mm), that sort of aspect (p) and when men speak to women at home, they speak like "Don't you know even things like this?" (*I*: mm-hmm). And surely I became less knowledgeable about current affairs (*I*: mm) because when you stay at home as a housewife, compared to when you worked, you tend to watch drama rather than news (We both laugh). The equal position with my husband (*I*: mm-hmm), things like that were really good when I worked.

Again a long pause at the start of Jina's talk suggests the sensitivity of her experiences as a housewife. Additionally, in this account there is an evident indication of perceiving the role of housewife as inferior to working women who enjoy financial independence as well as social recognition. Despite her hard work to look after their children and family, Jina's talk suggests that she felt that her job was less worthwhile than what her husband did outside the home. It also raises the question regarding the way domestic labour and housewives are treated in society in general. As seen in Minju's narrative, these women had an acute awareness of being a housewife in a gender segregated society where the public domain of employment is more highly valued than the private sphere of household labour. This was again found from Mai's account, who described being a housewife as 'lower class': "For society it's not very, because you don't earn anything, you don't earn any money, it's lower, kind of lower class."

6.3 Conclusion

Evidence presented so far demonstrates the dominance of ideological convictions of home-stay mothers and their gendered notion in deciding their employment status and childcare, especially considering varied biographical and demographic factors, such as the length of settlement in England and main reasons for migration. Regardless of these various aspects, home-stay mothers appeared to strongly endorse an intensive mothering ideology. For instance, there is no difference in their support of intensive mothering and gendered understanding of motherhood between the account of Seyoun, who came to England to accompany her expatriate husband and had been in England for less than three years, and that of Heji, who came to England to study and had lived in England for ten years. In addition, despite clear setbacks of being a stay-at-home mother, these women chose not to do paid work in order to look after their children. Among home-stay mothers their partners' role in childcare was almost completely absent and mothers' presence was represented as essential for children's wellbeing, not fathers. Thus, it seems there is an assumption that it is the mother's duty to do the job, not the father's. This reflects the pervasive position of 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity' in these women's lives, possibly derived from the Confucian patriarchal notion of the division of work between men and women. Confucianism lays the foundation of patriarchal relations and the individual human being's obligation to accomplish their given duty, i.e. as a father, as a daughter, as a daughter-in-law, as a mother or a child. In this regard, it is believed that although 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity' in this evidence seem to have the same appearance as those experienced by Western women, the origins are *arguably* distinctive as a result of the Confucian influence. Apart from this, analogous with Johnston and Swanson (2007), the discourse of home-stay mothers was child-centred as children's happiness and wellbeing were implicated as the main reasons for mothers' decisions not to work.

Notably, this kind of response dominantly emerged from the data of a majority of Korean and Japanese mothers yet not the mothers I interviewed from mainland China. Although two mothers from China stayed at home full-time, in their accounts the discourse of intensive mothering and anxiety about their children's emotional stability were not identified: for example, one mother was actively seeking work but could not find a job due

to her English; the other one used to work part-time but decided to quit as *she* felt very busy with two children and *she* missed them when she worked. In short, it was her needs not her children that were priorities in her story of why she was a home-stay mother. Consistent with chapter 5, Korean women in my study appeared to be more traditional than Japanese or Chinese groups although many Japanese mothers showed a strong intensive mothering ideology as well as gender biased viewpoint. In this respect the national and/or ethnic heritage of mothers seemed to play an important part in their motherhood and childcare in England. Having said that, a caveat should be given because the selection of my interviewees might have influenced the data and further research might prove different outcomes.

Chapter 7. Motherhood and Employment: Accounts of Working Mothers

Maintaining the theme of motherhood and employment, this chapter focuses on the examination of the interview data of employed mothers. The accounts of home-stay mothers in chapter 6 strongly subscribed to the ideology of intensive mothering in which mothers' care was perceived to be necessary for the healthy development of children, together with the gendered understandings of a woman's place as carer to husband and child. In part as a result, motherhood became the dominant identity for the majority of home-stay mothers, weakening their worker identity. Compared to this, the talk of the majority of employed mothers (12/15) did not necessarily advocate the idea of the mother's constant presence and availability for their children's happiness and wellbeing although it still showed aspects of intensive child caring, such as taking children to various activities. For these mothers there seemed to be no hierarchical understanding of childcare (e.g. that the mother's care is the best and has an 'irreplaceable' value for their children), thus it was treated as substitutable by other people. In this sense, the ways in which employed mothers constructed their motherhood and employment identity were significantly different from home-stay mothers. In particular, these patterns were more prevalently found in the interviews with mothers from mainland China due to the legacy of Chairman Mao's Communism, according to the accounts of the interviewees. However, detailed analysis of the data indicated that employed mothers were also subject to the gendered notion of mothering, similar to their home-stay counterparts.

Seven out of 15 working mothers were of Chinese origin (one from Hong Kong and the others from China), five Japanese and three Korean. Two employed mothers obtained A-level equivalent qualifications; one had a diploma; the other 12 mothers received a university education: two PhDs, six Master's and four Bachelor's degrees. Eight employed mothers achieved their highest qualification in Britain. Seven women originally came to England to study whereas eight came to accompany their partners. Their current employment included administrator, dietician, hairdresser, language teacher, software developer, PhD student, medical researcher and entrepreneurs running their own small businesses, such as a restaurant and newsagent's. One mother reported to have a household

income of over £ 80,000; four had £ 40,000-50,000; four £ 20,000-30,000; one less than £ 20,000; and five women opted out of providing this information.

Similar to chapter 6, the following section starts with the investigation of life stories from two employed mothers. Through this I aim to elucidate the differences between working mothers and home-stay mothers in the ways they constructed their narratives and identity. I also intend to underscore the social milieu in which individual stories were produced and how this interplayed with the individual agency in formulating their lives. Based on the dominant themes that have emerged in these narratives, the second part examines the discourse of other working mothers, focusing on three discursive themes: the legacy of their perceived Chinese work ethic; why mothers ‘chose’ to work; and the challenges of working mothers.

7.1 Stories of Two Working Mothers

This section presents the narratives of two working mothers from China. These two stories have been chosen primarily because themes that emerged in their narratives resonated with the discourse of the majority of other working mothers in this study. In this regard, they best illustrate the experiences of working mothers in this study, especially in comparison with the two home-stay mothers from Korea shown in chapter 6. In relation to this, the examination of examples from two different countries can also offer the opportunity to start to tentatively identify possible cultural differences between East Asian migrants. Apart from this, despite divergence between the two mothers from China, there were many similarities in their stories, such as their ideological beliefs in motherhood and work. In this sense, the way they constructed their stories appeared to show striking differences from that of home-stay mothers.

7.1.1 Narratives of Hua

7.1.1.1 Before Migration

Hua is a mother in her 30s of two children aged seven and three. She worked for an international organisation as a software developer. She came from China over ten years ago to join her Chinese husband who had come to Britain to study. Here is Hua's account of her working life before coming to England:

- 01: I had the first degree in China (*I: mm-hmm*)
02: and then I worked in the same city where my parents live (*I: ah*),
03: um worked for a few years and
04: you know it's a government company (*I: mm*) so it's nice,
05: I would say sometimes boring (*I chuckle*),
06: you know you don't have much to do...
07: I um I enjoyed the job before a couple of, two or three years (*I: mm*),
08: and later (p) there wasn't much to do,
09: there wasn't much to learn (*I: OK*)
10: and I started to get worried,
11: 'my skills would get downgraded (*I: OK*)
12: and I can't compete with people
13: who worked in a prestigious company like a foreign company'
14: because they train people differently (*I: mm-hmm*).
15: *Int:* What did that job mean to you at that time?
16: *Hua:* That job? (*I: mm-hmm*)
17: Umm at that time it was really just a job (laughs) (*I: OK*)
18: I never thought of resigning it (*I: OK*).
19: (p) I was thinking of (p) worried about my skills (*I: mm*)
20: but I never thought I would resign it.
21: I wasn't at that stage yet (*I: OK*).
22: Then I met my husband (*I: mm*).
23: He worked for like a software company (*I: mm*)
24: so it's not like a government company (*I: mm*)
25: so somehow he, then he started, he went to study abroad (*I: mm-hmm*).
26: Somehow it inspired me.
27: 'OK, I will just, this is an opportunity for me to change (*I: OK*) my life.'

This narrative encompasses important information to assist in understanding Hua's biography in connection with the other parts of her story. Whilst her affinity to her previous job does not appear to be that strong in this account (e.g. "it was really just a job"), a couple of significant pieces of information in relation to her overall attitudes towards employment could be teased out from this. First, she described her work as "nice" in line 04, which appears to be suggestive of the supposed job security and comparatively less demanding characteristics of public sector work. Her use of the affiliative phrase "you know" in this line suggests that the interviewer should understand these commonly known attributes of government organisations. However, given the description of her work in the following lines (e.g. "sometimes boring, you don't have much to do"/ "there wasn't much to do, there wasn't much to learn"), the adjective "nice" seems rather ambiguous and almost sounds ironic. At the same time, her recognition of and anxiety about stagnant skills development indicates that she actually cared about her career and had aspirations of a skilled worker, not just being complacent about having a secure job; suggesting the potential to change the course of her life later. Unlike the two home-stay mothers that I featured at the start of chapter 6, marriage was not portrayed as hindering her from pursuing her career ambition. Instead, meeting her husband became a stimulus to change her life trajectory. In lines 17-20 Hua emphasised that despite the stale characteristics of her work, she "**never** [my emphasis] thought of resigning" from her work. From this it is arguable that in intersection with her other identities, her worker identity played a dominant role in her life: regardless of whether she enjoyed her job or not, working was perceived to be essential in defining who she was as a young educated woman in China. This might also be an important sign of the work ethic that strongly emerged in later narratives: i.e. she states that "loss of work is a shame for Chinese people." Considering this, retaining job security, notwithstanding its "boring" and unchallenging features, might have been perceived to be vital for Hua.

7.1.1.2 After Migration and Motherhood

Inspired by her husband who was studying abroad, Hua said she decided to quit her job and study a higher degree in Britain. After getting married in China, Hua came to England with her husband and started a Master's degree on a different subject area from her Bachelor's. After completing her Master's, she began a PhD alongside her husband. In the

third year of her PhD she worked as a research officer at her university and one year later moved to the South of England where her husband found a job. These moves suggest the gendered characteristics of their relationships because she was the one who followed her husband, for instance to Britain initially and then to the South of England, not vice versa, even if she stayed in career mode. Hua also started her new career as a software developer for a multinational corporation in the same local area, while completing her PhD. After finishing her thesis and buying their own house, Hua and her husband decided to have children. During her degree ceremony, Hua was pregnant with their first child. Hua described her life since she met her husband as:

28: I think my life (p), one after another it's each a milestone (*I*: mm-hmm).

29: It's full of another.

30: I haven't had (p) time after I met my husband,

31: haven't really had time saying "Oh, I might relax a little bit."

As she described in this account, her life was filled with significant developments at different stages. Thus, although her employment status changed since her migration to England, it did not come to a halt; instead, it functioned as a stepping stone to enable her to enter a better career path. In this regard, there was a sense of continuation with no stopping point in her working life so far – she got married, came to England and began to study a new subject area, did a PhD and started to work, had children and was still working full-time. Thus, her worker identity appeared to continue to define who she was, irrespective of circumstantial changes at different temporal and spatial contexts. This narrative draws a rather contrasting picture to those of home-stay mothers whose working lives were disrupted once they got married and had children.

In order to continue her full-time career Hua asked her parents to come to England and help with childcare. Her parents looked after their first child for one and a half years until she started nursery. When her daughter was four, they had their second child. This time Hua's parents-in-law came to England to look after their children, especially the younger one. At the time of the interview her parents-in-law were still living with them. Although having children was described as one of the "milestones" in her life, motherhood did not appear to have affected her perception of work:

- 32: *Int*: How do you think having children affected the way you perceive your work?
- 33: *Hua*: Umm not sure about the way of the work.
- 34: (P) I can't think of any at the moment.
- 35: *Int*: Do you think having children affected your career in any way?
- 36: *Hua*: Having children (p) feels busier, definitely feels busier (*I*: OK)
- 37: because not only handle the work but also handle the children (*I*: mm).
- 38: Um and again I'm doing OK, you can have a work and life balance (*I*: mm)...
- 39: (p) Having children to me, at the moment I don't feel I'm not,
- 40: other than extra things you need to take her to here and there.
- 41: To my work I don't feel very much different.
- 42: I think if I didn't have children,
- 43: perhaps I will still work and focus on the career as it is.

It is clear from the above narrative that even after having children, her worker identity remained strong, although lines 42-43 may suggest that she would have more time to focus on her career if she did not have children. By contrast to home-stay mothers, having children and retaining employment was not perceived to be all or nothing; instead, it was represented as something that could be combined harmoniously, allowing women to “have a work and life balance”. Obviously it may well have been easier for Hua to manage both full-time work and childcare because she received help from her parents and parents-in-law. However, what was significant in her narrative was the fact that for Hua childcare was not necessarily what a mother should do; it could be left to other people, such as grandparents. Unlike the accounts of home-stay mothers, there appeared to be no anxiety about her children’s psychological wellbeing as a result of her absence and employment. In addition, compared to the narrative of other full-time mothers, her motherhood identity did not appear to dominate her other identities. The following narrative suggests the perceived significance of work outside the home, as deeply entrenched in her perceived Chinese culture:

- 44: Everybody works in China (*I*: ahh) I think everybody works...
- 45: Every educated people work (*I*: ahh),

- 46: even the women when they get married and get children,
47: they won't resign from their work (*I*: ah OK).
48: Loss of work is a shame for Chinese people (*I*: ahh). Yeah (chuckles).
49: *Int*: How do you think that sort of ethics has affected your work?
50: *Hua*: Yeah. Also I want to work (*I*: OK).
51: I, sometimes I think
52: 'Oh, if I don't work, what would I do at home?' (laughs) (*I*: OK)
53: because a housewife is not a good work for,
54: to describe a woman in China (chuckles) (*I*: mm-hmm).
55: Not like, perhaps not like here (*I*: OK).
56: Here has a different view...
57: I think before around early 20th century,
58: lots of women didn't work (in China).
59: It's because New Chinese, Republic of China was established
60: so advocated to release women (*I*: mm),
61: release them from home, go to work (*I*: OK)
62: so we, I was grown up in this environment (*I*: mm-hmm).

Hua's perception of the work ethic that she believed to be pervasive in China, as described in lines 44-48, had significant implications for her decision towards employment and childcare in England, affecting her biographical path. She suggested that like all educated people in China who carried on their work even after marriage and children, it was culturally appropriate for Hua to continue her work. In her story it was the negative connotations linked to housewives in China ("Loss of work is a shame for Chinese people"/ "a housewife is not a good work for, to describe a woman in China") that functioned as impetus for her to retain her employment status regardless of changes in her personal circumstances even in England. It is clear from this that the impact of her perceived Chinese cultural heritage remained firm in constructing Hua's life even though she had been living outside China for a long time. In this respect, her ethnic identity as Chinese appeared to be a dominant force shaping her experiences in England, in interplay with her other identities.

The ensuing narrative illuminates the inseparable characteristics of work in the identity of

Hua even more:

- 63: *Int*: What is the main reason why you're working?
64: *Hua*: One reason is there is no reason (*we both* chuckle),
65: just a (p) tradition (*I*: OK), just need to work (*I*: mm-hmm).
66: And sometimes I think, sometimes my husband says,
67: "You're still working at home. You've been working so hard.
68: I wonder if you feel accomplished."
69: And I said, "If you're rich enough, I will resign it."
70: But it's just a joke (laughs).
71: You know if I think seriously whether I will resign,
72: I will think about it very seriously.
73: I will think through why I'm not working (*I*: OK)
74: so I [*unclear*] yet haven't thought about why I work (*I*: mm OK).
75: But, if there is a time when I think why I'm not going to work (*I*: mm),
76: if that makes sense to you? (chuckles)
77: *Int*: Yeah yeah.

Like many working women she knew in China, paid work continued to be seen as an inseparable aspect of her identity. In a context where paid work was perceived to be an important part of Chinese culture, the reasons for working were portrayed as almost taken-for-granted ("there is no reason, just a tradition, just need to work"/ "haven't thought about why I work"); the narrative was presented to make it clear to the interviewer that this is what every Chinese person is supposed to do; it is not something people question. Hence, for Hua there had been no question about her participation in the labour market. Not surprisingly, considering the story she has told so far, for Hua a working mother was represented as being able to provide more positive things for their children than negative:

- 78: *Int*: What are the advantages and disadvantages of a working mother?
79: *Hua*: Umm the advantage is
80: I think they (working mothers) have a business view (*I*: mm) and (p)
81: so that's something if you work at daily at home,
82: if you stay at home, you won't get it...

83: how to operate the business, how to motivate people (*I: mm*)

84: umm not only skills are important

85: but motivation and intercommunication is also very important (*I: yeah*)

86: so working with this organisation makes me aware of this kind of thing

87: so when I talk to my children, even though some small things (p)

88: like for example, my daughter told me

89: one of her friends in the class went to a school concert

90: and she said “I wanted to be there too”.

91: I said “why didn't you say to your teacher you wanted to be there?”

92: and she said “I was afraid of it”.

93: I said I could give her some examples to say

94: you could do this way do that way (*I: mm-hmm*)

95: then I think this way helps my children to grow up (*I: mm*)

96: and be ready for the future work more easily as well (*I: yeah*)...

97: Also when I take my children to H (the place where she worked) (*I: mm*),

98: they will feel ‘Oh, that's a great place.’ (*I: yeah*)

99: They will feel, yeah I feel that

100: (p) maybe I'm setting an example for them to see

101: what kind of future they might have (*I: mm*) or even better-

102: but uh I would say if I'm not working,

103: I wouldn't have this kind of view (*I: mm*).

104: I would just work at home,

105: (p) handling with cooking, with my children's exercise,

106: and also talking mums who may also stay at home (*I: mm*)

107: and don't have this kind of view (*I: mm*) outside the family (*I: OK*).

108: *Int*: Do you think there are any disadvantages of a working mother?

109: *Hua*: Umm I think it's my children see me less (chuckles) (*I: OK*)

110: um (P) especially with two children

111: my focus now is really to help my daughter education wise (*I: mm-hmm*)

112: so I need to spend time with her on her exercise and on her piano (*I: mm*)-

113: so relatively have much less time with my son (*I: OK*)...

Despite my question regarding both the advantages and disadvantages of a working mother,

Hua's first two thirds of the narrative were dominated by the positive aspects of employed mothers. It was when I asked her again whether there were any negative facets of being a working mother, she gave her account of the limited time she had with her children, particularly with her younger one. This response again reinforces her strong identification with her work, dominant throughout her narrative.

For Hua, working for a big international business organisation was not only represented as helping her to develop new skills, such as motivational and intercommunication skills, but also to apply these newly acquired competences to bringing up her children. This was depicted as beneficial for her children by helping them to be more confident and articulate in various social settings, which home-stay mothers were portrayed as not being able to give to their children. In addition, working in a well known company was described as "setting an example" for her children to have similar aspirations for their future to herself or even higher than herself, which children of stay-home mothers could not gain. In this regard, home-stay mothers were depicted as having a narrow scope of outlook on life, confined to the network of other stay-home mothers and to their family affairs, just "handling with cooking, with their children's exercise". In this sense, Hua's narrative is suggestive of the 'othering' of home-stay mothers.

On the other hand, Hua described the disadvantage of being a working mother as spending less time with her children. In particular, as her focus lay in the education of her oldest child, she spent even less time with her youngest child, leaving him to his grandparents. What was striking in this account was again that there was no hint of concern about his emotional insecurity as a result of her infrequent presence, commonly found in the talk of home-stay mothers. However, at the same time, though it appears that she did not support the idea of giving up employment in order to dedicate her time to establish emotional security for her children, her accounts in line 111-112 indicate her support of the "professional" child rearing Hays (1996) and Vincent et al. (2004) suggested. For instance, as examined in chapter 5, Hua was actively involved in providing a variety of educational and extra school activities for her daughter, spending a great amount of her time and energy taking her to different classes as well as ensuring that her daughter practised piano on a regular basis. In this regard, Hua is arguably involved in intensive child rearing, similar to professionally employed middle-class mothers in the study of Vincent et al.

(2004). However, the root of her practice may differ from Western mothers examined by Vincent et al. as a result of different ideological influence based on Confucian traditions. As discussed in chapter 2, education and children's academic accomplishment constitute one of the most important aspects of child rearing in East Asia (see Chan 2008). Based on Confucian ideals that prioritise communitarian values over individual ones, a child's academic success is often regarded as the achievement of the family as a whole, not only as an avenue to the happy future life of an individual child (Lee 2002). In this a child might be forced to work hard against their will. This seems to be the opposite to Hays' (1996) child-centred intensive mothering where an individual child's happiness is seen as the central tenet of 'good' mothering.

7.1.1.3 The Continuity of Past and Present

As examined so far, marriage and motherhood did not function as disjunctive points in Hua's life path, retaining her worker identity alongside motherhood identity. The final extract of Hua's narrative elucidates this:

114: *Int*: What does your current job mean to you?

115: *Hua*: Currently I'm doing my day job, that's developing software (*I*: mm),

116: um (p) along with that, I also encourage people to (p) work with other people,

117: who have different cultural backgrounds, more effectively (*I*: mm-hmm),

118: which means I I'm- doing a programme called culture talks (*I*: ah OK)-.

119: I'm running this programme, it's like a monthly talk (*I*: mm-hmm), culture talk,

120: inviting some people on certain subjects

121: so initially it was on Chinese culture (*I*: mm).

123: So I've been doing it for about two years...

124: it's been broadcast to the whole company (*I*: ahh)

125: so with this I feel like in the company

126: I'm not only a person who's just sitting in the corner, writing some code

127: but also bring value to the company (*I*: yeah) in a higher level (*I*: mm),

128: what this means to me is (p) more than earning money (*I*: mm),

129: also again feel proud that I contribute to the company's growth (*I*: yeah).

From this story, it appears evident that Hua's work was a key component of Hua's life. For Hua her work meant "more than earning money". Her engagement in the running of "culture talks" within her company enabled her to feel her contribution to the organisation in a more meaningful way, together with her day to day tasks. Also, she was bringing aspects of her cultural heritage into work, attempting to signify the importance of culture not just to the interviewer but also to her organisation and colleagues. This provided Hua with a sense of pride and direction for her present. In this respect, her job was not "just a job", but a career with a bright future ahead.

7.1.2 Narratives of Ping

7.1.2.1 Before Migration

Ping is a mother in her 40s of two children aged 16 and nine. Ping worked part-time in an accounting company. She came from China about 20 years ago to accompany her Chinese husband. She described her work before coming to England in the following way:

- 01: *Ping*: When I was in China, I was a teacher,
- 02: I didn't actually go to university (*I*: alright?).
- 03: After secondary school, I went to the teacher's training school (*I*: OK).
- 04: That's where they train teachers (*I*: ahh). I was there for four years...
- 05: I did first couple of years,
- 06: they teach like further education
- 07: then second two years was mainly how to teach,
- 08: really about education (*I*: mm), yeah,
- 09: so I was a primary school teacher...
- 10: *Int*: How did you feel about your work?
- 11: *Ping*: I enjoyed it. Working with children was good, yeah (*I*: OK).

Similar to Hua's first narrative, the above quote contains much valuable information in fathoming Ping's biography. First, it is evident that her profession as a primary school

teacher played a definitive role in her identity (e.g. “I was a primary school teacher”); that appears to be how she understood herself. In this sense, her worker identity is distinctly visible here. Although it is hard to grasp fully the level of importance of her employment in her life here, having a well respected job had a number of ramifications for her future life, as will become clearer later. For instance, her employment status as a school teacher played a crucial part in shaping her employment path in England. This professional work, regardless of whether she had a university degree, became a yardstick to measure the standard of work Ping wanted to engage in for the future, which led her to a lengthy period of retraining. Also, the fact that she did not go to university in China became a driving force for her to take a degree course in England in order to find the kind of job she felt she deserved.

7.1.2.2 After Migration

While working as a teacher, she met her Chinese husband who was studying a PhD in England and got married. In order to follow her husband, Ping quit her job and moved to England. Similar to Hua, this is again indicative of gendered relations between Ping and her husband in which her husband’s position and career development took priority over hers. When she came to England, she was not able to continue her teaching and her lack of English skills presented her with difficulties, especially in the first phase of her life in England:

- 12: Very hard stop working and came here, couldn't speak English
- 13: and need to rely [*unclear*] basically wholly on my husband (*I: mm*).
- 14: I couldn't get out even to buy (*I: mm*) buy things or maybe I could.
- 15: Then I got a few things I knew roughly how much they cost,
- 16: gave them a note (*we both chuckle*) without saying
- 17: so (*I: yeah*) it was really hard, yeah (*I: OK*).
- 18: So I just felt I didn't want that kind of life...

Compared to her life in China, it is apparent here that her ethnic identity became prominent through her experiences as a minority woman who had very little command of English. Her story conveys an image of being thrown into the deep end: she used to be a confident

and independent working woman; however, now she had to “rely basically wholly on” her husband. In particular, her hardship was even more highlighted in the description of her actual experience in lines 14-16 where her struggle with basic day-to-day communications is evident. In this line the interviewer and interviewee chuckled together, which signifies their shared understanding of the situation and Ping’s feelings: the interviewer could easily empathise with the teller because I, as a migrant woman myself, also experienced difficulties in communicating with people in the early period of my life in Britain. Ping’s recollection of her past evoked the interviewer’s early memories. In this sense, their chuckle implied double meanings: it was a way of dealing with painful memories for both of them; at the same time, it meant that they both were able to overcome, move away from those situations and thus chuckle about it. In this process a sense of connection and solidarity between the teller and the listener began to emerge here. In line 17 the interviewer’s response (“yeah”) to Ping’s statement in lines 14-16 shows an acknowledgement of her comprehension of the teller’s feelings of powerlessness in a new environment, which consolidated the sense of bond they shared and made it even stronger.

Ping’s portrayal of her strong resentment towards her situation and simultaneous determination to free herself from that situation were notable in line 18. Sometime after staying at home with feelings of boredom and frustration, Ping started to take an English course and also began to take full-time manual work in a hospital. Despite her initial setback as an ethnic minority woman who had lost her professional working status, Ping’s story has her embarking on a journey to regain her professional identity by starting from the bottom. In this sense, her affinity with paid work appeared to maintain its influential power in the way she understood herself; thus, her worker identity seemed to continue to be a crucial part in her life. The following is Ping’s explanation of why she worked:

19: *Int*: You could have stayed at home when you came here.

20: Why did you decide to work?

21: *Ping*: (P) I think in China everybody works.

22: You know in China, (p) ladies and men everyone from old, young,

23: everyone works so there is no tradition in staying at home (*I*: OK).

24: So that's not a tradition.

25: And also you know you want to get out, have your career,

- 26: you want to achieve something in your life.
27: I found just staying at home and doing nothing is not me (chuckles)...
28: (p) the time before I came here...everyone worked.
29: I think it's to do with more Chairman Mao
30: you know he said "women are the half of the (*I*: yeah), just equal to men"
31: so everyone just goes to work...

This narrative highlights how salient her perceived Chinese cultural value was in shaping her experiences in England. Her account in lines 21-24 echoes Hua's version of work culture in China, where "there is no tradition in staying at home". This high value placed on paid employment became the predominant factor in the construction of Ping's identity. Thus, she could not think of herself "just staying at home and doing nothing", even if this meant she had to take up an unskilled job at this stage of her life, downgraded from her teaching profession; the strong work ethic believed to be pervasive in Chinese culture appears as an unstoppable influence on the story told by Ping.

7.1.2.3 After Motherhood

A few years after she settled down in England, Ping had her first child. The manual job Ping had at the early period of her life in England helped bring extra income to her household and improve her English to some extent. However, her reflections on this time indicate she was not satisfied with it as she always knew she was a very capable person, as she described: "I didn't accept the labour job because I knew that's not for me so I carried on studying. I knew I would be able to get a better job." After her daughter was born, Ping decided to go to university in England in order to improve her employability:

- 32: After having the child, having my daughter,
33: I was thinking 'oh, what am I going to do?' (*I* chuckle) you know.
34: I couldn't teach,
35: it was very frustrating because I was a very able person in China (*I*: mm)
36: but once you came here, (p) you don't speak English (*I*: mm)
37: and you can't really find a good job
38: so I decided to go to university...

- 39: I wasn't just used to staying at home because in China everyone works.
40: Although here not a lot of people, not now,
41: but about ten years ago, 15 years ago,
42: a lot of people stayed at home
43: looking after their husband (*I chuckle*) or looking after their children (*I: yeah*).
44: But, I wasn't used to it,
45: I just thought I can't carry on my life like that (*I: yeah*),
46: that's why like I said yeah, after I had my daughter, I started university.

This shows a considerable difference from the accounts of home-stay mothers. In lieu of having a child becoming the very ground for staying at home, Ping began to question her next move. In addition, consistent with Hua's account, it is clear from line 39 that her perceived Chinese work ethic was one major factor affecting the way Ping felt about herself in England. As someone who was brought up in an environment where she believed everybody worked, participation in the labour market was perceived to be an essential part of their identity and life for Chinese people. Moreover, lines 40-43 demonstrate that despite her perception of general English culture, in which many women did not do paid work in order to look after the family, Ping continued to employ her putative Chinese cultural heritage in sculpting her life in England. In this regard, consonant with Hua, her ethnic identity as Chinese appears strong in formulating her life in a different cultural milieu, in interaction with her other identities. Line 45: "I just thought I can't carry on my life like that" is again suggestive of Ping's strong determination. Thus, in order to concentrate on her studying, Ping and her husband sent their daughter to her mother-in-law in China for three years until she finished her degree:

- 47: *Int*: How did you find it?
48: *Ping*: It was very hard, yeah. Um (*I: mm*).
49: (p) I don't think a lot of English people will understand that,
50: but, at that time I knew it was hard
51: but we thought it's just quite uh, it's not like um like say
52: I think English people just couldn't understand why I do this.
53: But in China because you know families are very close to each other (*I: yeah*),
54: they tend to help each other (*I: mm*)-,

- 55: even the families like living in China
56: their parents always help to look after grandchildren (*I: mm-hmm*)
57: so it's just quite natural
58: and my mother-in-law just retired and she was only 55
59: so she was looking after my daughter (*I: OK*).

In this narrative there appears to be a certain level of resemblance to Hua's story, in which she also utilised the support of her parents and parents-in-law in childcare in order to retain her employment status. Their narratives also point to a common assumption around work and childcare in China where the familial support appears to play a vital role in women's participation in the labour market. However, I have to point out that Hua and Ping were rather exceptional in my sample in terms of actually utilising parental support for childcare in England as most of my participants, including other Chinese, did not receive help from their families. Whilst she described her experience of sending her daughter away as "very hard", there was no indication of any worries about any potential psychological disturbance her child might experience when the mother did not care for her directly. Here care of children by grandparents was treated as 'natural' and 'normal' practice in the Chinese cultural context. At the same time, the rather defensive tone Ping used in lines 49-52 suggests that she was aware of an intensive mothering ideology prevalent in England. Nevertheless, again she did not affiliate herself with her perceived English culture where she was located but instead maintained her perceived cultural roots in deciding on her childcare choice.

After completing her degree, she found a job related to her degree in a company and brought her daughter back to England. Many years after having her daughter, she had her second child. Ping reduced her working time to 31 hours in order to pick up her son from school. Nevertheless, Ping maintained a strong identification with her work:

- 60: *Int*: How do you think your perception of your job has changed after having children?
61: *Ping*: I don't think I've changed that much (*I: mm*)
62: because I was still, I'm still like kind of work very hard (*I: mm*).
63: I want to, I just want to make sure I do my job well,

- 64: rather than just you know doing OK you know (*I*: yeah).
- 65: I do actually put a lot of hours
- 66: and I you know I actually now I'm more relaxed
- 67: but a few years ago when I just started the job,
- 68: I put my job first actually before my family (*I*: did you?).
- 69: Yes. Maybe I'm kind of you know (*p*) I did actually
- 70: I you know say if I was needed for the job, I would go (*I*: OK)-,
- 71: but now I think I've changed a bit...
- 72: because I've been on the job for many years
- 73: so I know I don't need to (*I*: OK) and yeah (*I*: all right).

Here the continuation of the worker identity is distinctively visible even after her motherhood, especially in lines 68-70, to the extent that she put her job first before the family when she started. Lines 71-72 seem to suggest that her focus on work changed because now she felt she had established herself in her work as a result of working in the same organisation for many years. Having children did not stop her from putting all her energy and effort into her career development, similar to Hua. Here she does not seem to feel like she needs to excuse being work focused though previously she was a bit more defensive about sending her daughter to her mother-in-law in China. While Ping did not rely on her other family members living in China as a way of reconciling childcare and work any longer like Hua, she was able to receive the support of her husband, unlike Hua, as shown in chapter 5. Again, it is noticeable here that there was no anxiety or concerns about her children's emotional stability and the potential damage working mothers could have inflicted on children. Her accounts in 68-70 show a distinctive contrast with the narratives of home-stay mothers, in which giving up work to look after children was very common and which were filled with disjuncture due to having children. Reflecting her perception of the importance of work, the following narrative illuminates more positive aspects of a working mother than downsides:

- 74: *Int*: What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of a working mother are?
- 74: *Ping*: Ahhh well maybe disadvantages are
- 75: you don't spend time as much as you want (*I*: mm),

- 76: you wish to be with your children
77: and maybe you don't get time to do the housework
78: and sometimes you have to rush like
79: everything will be accumulated for the weekend (*I* chuckle)
80: like cleaning, taking the children to different sorts of activities (*I*: mm).
81: But, at the same time you work, then you have friends outside family (*I*: mm)
82: and you really like in, within the world like not isolated
83: and you have a job and bring an income as well,
84: and you feel you're, I feel I'm (p) helping myself
85: and confident and self-esteem you know it's all good (*I*: yeah)...
86: Mothers staying at home all day don't make children better (*I*: mm-hmm).
87: Some mothers may not look after them,
88: they may go shopping or do other things.
89: When you stay at home,
90: you should play with your children, read and interact with them.
91: But, if they go to a nursery, they can interact with other children (*I*: that's right).
92: My daughter was brought up by my mother-in-law (*I*: mm-hmm)
93: but she's fine, so mums don't need to stay at home all day (*I*: OK).

Analogous with Hua's narrative, Ping pointed out that a main drawback of a working mother was the time constraint she had with her children. Nevertheless, this did not extend to any sort of concern about the healthy development of her children. On the other hand, this account is suggestive of there being more positive aspects of employment that Ping perceived (line 81-85), like Hua. Given this, her work outside the home was portrayed as crucial in defining who she was outside the family. Simultaneously, she was rather critical about stay-home mothers. Dissimilar to accounts of many home-stay mothers, just being there for their children did not mean much from Ping's point of view; staying at home all day did not necessarily meant that mothers spent all their time for their children as "they may go shopping or do other things". In this sense, what really mattered was not a quantity of time but the quality time mothers spent with children. Thus for her, unless mothers "play with", "read to" and "interact with" their children, staying at home all day did not benefit their children. This in a sense suggests that she supported intensive care and

attention for children albeit it did not necessarily mean by the mother. Parallel with this, line 80 indicates her engagement with professional and intensive childcare, taking her children to various activities, as identified in the narrative of Hua. Meanwhile, nurseries were depicted as a good alternative to mothers, offering the kind of interaction children needed. Moreover, in lines 92-93 Ping employed the example of her daughter, who was looked after by her grandmother when she was a baby, in order to convince the listener her decision was right; she was not a 'bad' mother even if she worked; and all mothers should work. Then, parallel with Hua's narratives, the 'othering' of home-stay mothers is identifiable here.

7.1.2.4 Past and Present: the Continuity of Her Story as a Working Mother

The following interview extract illuminates the way Ping felt about herself as a working mother at the time of the interview:

94: *Int*: What does your current job mean to you?

95: *Ping*: Um yeah I feel fulfilled and happy with what I'm doing.

96: I like what I'm doing so every day I go to work

97: and the time just flies by and "oh, 5 o'clock" (laughs) I didn't realise

98: so that's a good thing.

As can be seen from this, her job gave Ping a sense of contentment accompanied by feelings of fulfillment.

7.1.3 Narratives: the Construction of the Past and Present

Ping's narrative displayed a more acute prominence of her identity as an ethnic minority woman than Hua's, probably as a result of the different levels of English skill they had at their entry point to England. However, despite this difference in the emergence and development of ethnic identity between the two alongside other biographical divergences, their perceived Chinese culture appears to have been influential in their lives outside China.

For them the work ethic they believed to have inherited from China was profoundly significant in constructing their identity and life in England. In this sense, ethnicity played a salient part in the formation of both Hua's and Ping's identity. This is similar to the narratives of home-stay mothers, in which their perceived cultural heritage remained influential in their lived experience in England. However, simultaneously there is some evidence suggesting that, despite their strong affiliation with their perceived cultural heritage, a certain degree of influence from their location in England occurred as well: for example, Ping compared herself to English mothers; also, some of their child rearing practices and ethos, such as taking them for various activities, reflected intensive child rearing identified among middle-class mothers in the UK (see Vincent et al. 2004), although whether it originated from England or not needs further examination.

Drawing from their perceived cultural background, both Hua and Ping managed to forge their worker identity, constantly investing and developing their skills. Divergent from stay-home mothers, they did not have the hierarchical understanding of care, in which the mother was placed at the top of the rung. Also, in the stories they told me there was no apprehension for their children's psychological and emotional health as a result of the absence of the mother. Instead, childcare responsibility was described as something that could be done by other people, such as grandparents and nurseries. For them it was even conveyed as 'natural' to use their familial support for childcare in order to develop their skills and continue their employment.

In addition, for both women their career paths were not halted by their marriage, coming to England or having children. Instead, their migration as a result of marriage was portrayed as functioning as a catalyst to change or even improving their occupation. Moreover, having children was painted as hardly bringing any disruption or a shift in their work even if it made Hua feel busier and Ping cut down her working hours a bit. Thus, there was a sense of continuation in their story lines, in terms of their employment, contrasting with the narratives of home-stay mothers. Likewise, their worker identities continued to shape their lives strongly despite shifts in their circumstantial situations. In this regard, the way these working mothers constructed their identity and biography showed significant differences from the stay-home mothers presented in the previous chapter. However, through reconstructing their life stories, the two working mothers tried to persuade the interviewer

how good a mother they were, how right their decision to work was and how beneficial their employment was not only for themselves but also for their children, in the same way as home-stay mothers tried to assure the listener how committed they were as mothers and how right their decision was to stay at home for their children.

On the other hand, their narrative accounts showed evidence of persistent gendered relations: for instance, the move to be with their husbands was clearly gendered when they migrated to England. Also, even if they did not engage in intensive mothering like home-stay mothers, their narratives indicated their involvement in intensive child caring. Especially, the case of Hua was highly illustrative of the continuation of gender segregated beliefs and norms between her husband and herself, as seen in chapter 5. In this sense, they fit into the imagery of 'emphasised femininity' although their active participation in the labour market might appear to challenge this.

7.2 Discourse of Employed Mothers

7.2.1 The Legacy of Their Perceived Chinese Work Ethic

Consistent with the narratives of Hua and Ping, the talk of other employed mothers from China echoed this strong work ethic. Chen was a mother from China with two children aged 13 and two. Chen studied medicine and worked as a doctor in a well-respected hospital in China, together with her Chinese husband. In order to broaden their life experience Chen and her husband migrated to England five years ago with their daughter. Since arriving in England, Chen and her husband had been working as acupuncturists until they opened their own practice in recent years because their medical qualifications were not recognised in Britain. Chen's following account indicates how she thinks work is perceived in Chinese culture:

You know in China, women uh (p) go to work (*I: mm*) I think for equal rights. If women don't have a job (*I: mm*), maybe you depend on your husband (*I: mm*), everything (*I: yes*) you know so you can't be independent (*I: yes*)...In China you know you have to go to work (*I: mm-hmm*). I had to. It's not because your family

pushes you or the government pushes you but the circumstances yeah yeah the environment, you feel you have to (*I*: OK).

This is suggestive of her perception of the deeply and widely pervasive axiom of paid work outside the home in Chinese society. In addition, the invisible yet powerful cultural pressures women in China face are marked here: in her story nobody forced her to work but she felt she had to. In this portrayal of her cultural context where paid employment for mothers with young children was perceived to be ‘necessary’, there was little room for an intensive mothering ideology involving the mother’s incessant presence for children to develop:

If I can afford a nursery, I would like to work full-time (*I*: mm) because uh in the summer I tried to (p) you know let her go to the nursery (*I*: mm) but the fees were so expensive, you know I can’t afford it (*I*: yeah I know).

Unlike China where she was able to work full-time even after having her eldest child thanks to help from her family, the option of having the familial support was not available to Chen in England. Thus, she talked about having to find an alternative when she had her second child, but she stated that the high cost of nurseries in Britain forced her to reduce her working hours into two days in order to accommodate their childcare needs. It appears that this decision was mainly driven by financial reasons, not by any perceived necessity or the vitality of the mother’s care for her child. Moreover, a strong inclination to work was constantly visible in her talk (e.g. “If I can afford a nursery, I would like to work full-time”).

Similar discursive patterns also emerged from the accounts of Lucy, another mother of two children from China. After graduating from university, Lucy worked for an international trading company for a few years. During this period, Lucy met her Chinese husband who was planning to study a Master’s degree in Britain. Lucy came to England about eight years ago, following her husband. Since arriving in England, Lucy began to work in a local Chinese goods shop full-time. A few years later, she had her first child and then the second. After having children, Lucy changed her employment status from full-time to part-time in order to care for them. But, similar to Chen, the expensive childcare fees were given as the

main reason for her decision: “Because it's quite expensive to employ a nanny or put them in a nursery, yeah, so I have to do that.” Parallel with Chen’s talk, there appear to be no worries about her children’s emotional security in this. Lucy also described young mothers in China as being actively involved in paid employment, leaving their children to the care of other females:

In China most young people (*I: mm*) like to work (chuckles) (*I: OK*). Yeah. Even though they have children (*I: mm*), they will (p) employ uh-hh nannies, or their mother or mother-in-law (*I: mm-hmm*) would take care of their children (*I: mm*) so young people, most of young people work (*I: OK*).

Like her portrayal of many other Chinese women in China, for Lucy staying at home full-time was not an ideal option and her account showed a strong desire to work: “I can't stay at home, nothing to do.” Resonating with the discourse of other mothers from China, there was an absence of an intensive mothering ideology in Lucy’s accounts. These kinds of attitudes towards work again emerged in the story told by Jia, another mother from China. Before coming to England, Jia worked as an accountant for over ten years. When her child was born in China, she hired one of her relatives as a live-in nanny for two years until her daughter started a nursery so she could continue her work. After many years of working for a government organisation, Jia was made redundant due to her involvement with a spiritual activity the Chinese government was trying to clamp down on. As there was a potential threat to her safety with the ongoing persecution carried out by the government, her husband who was working in England after completing his study at a British university suggested to her to join him. In addition, Jia and her husband wanted their daughter to be educated in Britain. As a result, Jia came to England with her daughter three years ago. At the time of the interview Jia was running her own shop full-time while taking the full responsibility of caring for her nine year old daughter, including taking and picking her up from the school.

According to Jia, “in China everyone needs to get a job” because they can't survive. While employment was portrayed as something people in China were forced to do as a means of survival, her other interview extracts indicate more deeply embedded beliefs around paid work, prevalently identified among the accounts of many mothers from China. Upon

arriving in England she began to run her own business even though she did not need to work:

Before I came here um (p) my, Cindy's daddy (her husband) bought this shop for me (*I*: mm), because he knows me, I can't stay at home (*I*: mm), I want to have something to do (*I*: OK). That's why he bought this one. When I came from China, I came here (her shop) straight away...Before, we lived separately for many years (*I*: mm) because I didn't want to lose my job. It was a good job (chuckles) so I didn't want to lose it (*I*: mm) so that's why I always stayed there (in China) (*I*: mm) and visited here (England).

In England Jia said she did not need to worry about the survival of her family because her husband was earning a good salary as a highly qualified expert in his field. Nevertheless, her talk clearly indicated a strong propensity for work and the indivisible part it played in her identity and life. Thus, Jia came straight to the shop her husband bought for her as soon as she arrived in England. The salience of work for her identity was also illuminated in the fact that she had stayed in China in order to retain her secure and well-paid job, having lived apart from her husband for many years. Consistent with this, her following account is suggestive of the perceived importance of the independence of the individual, advocated by Chairman Mao's Communist ideology:

I think everybody has, (p) from my opinion, I don't want to stay at home only do [housework] (*I*: mm)...Also if I work, I can make some money (*I*: mm), I can have my own money to do something. I think you can't just get money from other people (*I*: mm-hmm). If you're normal, you're healthy (*I*: mm), you need to do something.

Showing a striking similarity to the discourse of other mothers from China, participation in the economic activity was portrayed as the "norm", which suggested that all "normal and healthy" women should work, regardless of having children or not. Given this statement, it does not seem unusual that her husband purchased a business for her even before she landed in England so she could continue to work even outside China.

However, it is worth pointing out that despite the construction of employment as an important part of Chinese women's identity based on the Communist principle of gender equality, it is evident from their accounts that gendered relations continued to shape the experiences of the above women. For example, although both Chen and her husband acquired the same level of professional qualifications and experiences, when it came to the childcare issue, it was Chen who changed her work status into part-time. Similarly, when Lucy and her husband could not afford full-time nurseries or nannies for their young children, it was Lucy who reduced her working hours substantially to accommodate their childcare needs. Moreover, even if Jia worked full-time like her husband, it was Jia who took the brunt of childcare responsibility for their daughter.

7.2.2 Why Women 'Chose' to Work: *"I also have a life other than just being a mother"*

It emerged from the talk of many working mothers (nine) that only caring for their children was not an emotionally satisfying experience, as Sunmi, a part-time employed mother from Korea, expressed adamantly: "To be honest, only looking after the kids at home is very depressing; I would like to work even part-time." Sunmi initially came to England in order to gain a professional qualification in hairdressing eight years ago. As a talented and confident hairdresser Sunmi believed she would become very successful in her career until she accidentally became pregnant with her first child. After marriage to her Korean-British husband, Sunmi had her first child, followed by the second. Having children had a significant impact on her career as she had to juggle with childcare. Nevertheless, the importance of work in her identity did not disappear and Sunmi continued to work even when she was heavily pregnant with her third child. Here is Sunmi's version of the positive aspects of working:

First of all, going out and doing my work is good fun (*I: mm*) because it's a job I like. If you only look after the kids at home, you feel very low, and only feel irritable (*I: mm-hmm*). But, if I go out and meet people, and work because it is a job I really want to do, even if it's hard (*p*), I get lots of energy from it as much as it is hard...

Despite the hardship of combining motherhood and paid employment, working and having social interaction with other people were described as mentally satisfying, giving her “lots of energy”, unlike just looking after children at home. In a similar vein, involvement with paid employment was positively represented in the account of Lucy:

You know being with the children ALL THE TIME is (p) sometimes very tiring (*I: mm*), hard (chuckles) so you have to relax yourself. Yeah, I think working is quite a good way (chuckles), good way yeah (*I: mm*). You can uh (p) be together with some other different people, make me think better or yes (*I: OK*), that's a good thing for me yeah.

In this extract work outside the home was portrayed as “a good way” of getting a break from the hardship of 24/7 childcare. Similar to Sunmi’s account, interacting with other adults was described as providing emotional benefits for mothers. In line with this, the account of Lang reveals a negative depiction of being a stay-home mother. After completing her PhD at a British university, Lang got married to her British husband and had her two children. At the same time, she had been working as a medical researcher in a hospital since her graduation. In order to retain her employment, Lang used the workplace nursery full-time for her two young children. She described the way she felt during maternity leave in the following way:

Well, taking two maternity leaves, that was one was six months, the other one was nine months (*I: mm*). I know now what is like not working. Yeah. Because I knew I had a chance to go back to work you know I was on maternity leave so I wasn't that worried (*I: mm*), but, even staying at home (p) just like that felt like forever, I didn't like that (*I: OK*). Yeah yeah...I don't want to be a housewife (*I: mm*). You know it drives me a little bit crazy if I do that (laughs).

In Lang’s story, taking two maternity leaves offered her a small window of opportunity to taste what it felt like to be a full-time housewife, through which she consolidated her desire to continue her work. Similar to Sunmi and Lucy, working was depicted as a good channel to break away from the boredom of childcare by interacting with other people: “If you

work, you're gonna meet friends and have a different routine from baby talk (*I: mm*), always you know nappies, bottles all the time (*we both chuckle*).” In addition, being a mother with a career was described as giving more satisfaction by allowing her to engage in different spheres of life:

Int: What are the advantages and disadvantages of a working mother?

Lang: Well, first of all (p) I like my career, yeah, it gives you satisfaction, yeah for being a professional, yeah, especially you worked hard, studied hard for all your qualifications (*I: mm*) so you don't want to give up (*I: no*). And (p) it gives you a different field, you know I've just got motherhood and a career, that's not compromised (*I: mm*). I think yeah you can have a switch, you know, after work, you can enjoy your motherhood (*we both chuckle*), yeah, and in the day time you can enjoy the career (*I: mm*) so I think you feel more (*I: mm*) satisfaction (*I: OK*).

Having a career was seen as offering another dimension to her life, which could successfully be combined with motherhood without undermining the other. In this motherhood and employment were portrayed as two independent domains, which could easily be separated yet simultaneously exist symbiotically. In addition, having these two different identities was represented as enabling mothers to appreciate and enjoy each of them even more without feeling jaded by either.

The talk of Tomomi, a full-time employed Japanese mother of two children, is also reminiscent of this. Tomomi, before taking full-time employment, stayed home for about six years to care for her two children. When her husband's employment status became insecure, Tomomi began working while her husband took over the childcare responsibility. Since, she had been working full-time in a trading company and her work became a salient part of her identity:

Int: What does this job mean to you?

Tomomi: (P) um (P) to me it's very important (*I: OK*). I don't I don't wanna lose this job. (P) Ummm I can't, I am probably not able to go back to housewife in a way (*I: OK*). No, probably not. I won't get satisfied (*I: OK*). Yeah I've learnt a lot, learn everyday different things (*I: mm*) and (p) of course there are some stress, but

(P) uh especially kids become full-time pupils you know at school (*I*: yeah) so if I stay at home from nine to three o'clock, nobody is there, (p) um I will probably get bored...

Like many other working mothers in this study, employment was described in a positive light, providing individuals with opportunities to learn new things and develop skills. This is particularly notable, given that she had an experience of being a full-time mother for six years. It is suggested in her talk that the characteristics of household labour are stagnant and involved the repetition of the same sort of chores, with no prospect of learning anything, unlike paid employment. In this talk there are a number of moments she paused for a long time. This might indicate the emotional dilemma Tomomi felt about her work because of the ongoing tension between her and her stay-home husband shown in chapter 5: Tomomi had clear awareness of the struggle of her husband who held conventional gender norms yet was forced to stay home looking after their children because he could not find a job; thus, while she strongly affiliated herself with her work, the pauses might suggest her feelings of guilt and sorrow towards her home bound husband.

Analogous with this, Yoko, a mother from Japan with two children who began her degree course eight months after her first child was born, also described her experience of being a home-stay mother as unsatisfying:

Int: When you didn't work for eight months when your daughter was a baby, how did that affect your feelings about yourself?

Yoko: Ummmmmm good question. I think although it was a very positive experience, um (p) and it was lovely just being with my daughter, I kept thinking I really want to go back to work (*I*: mm) ...So I must have felt that (p) um I maybe didn't fully enjoy just being a mum (*I*: OK) and I always felt that anyway (*I*: mm). Um just being a mum doesn't satisfy me. Yeah so I think just (p) spending time just with my daughter really made me feel (p) um that it's important for women to have a job as well as being a mum (*I*: mm). So I'm gonna really keep up working (*I*: mm). I don't think I will ever quit working (*I*: mm) till when I retire basically yeah.

While being a full-time mum was described as “lovely”, it was depicted as not good enough to satisfy her emotional needs as an individual. This is indicative of the importance of self identity for Yoko alongside her motherhood identity, in understanding herself and her life. In this regard, having a job outside the home meant her life was not only confined to the family, giving her opportunities to see life from a different spectrum:

Being a working mum um which means that I also have a life (p) other than just being a mother (*I: mm*), which I like, because um I when I was just a mother (*I: mm*), which is nice, I kind of felt I missed out like I said on social life (*I: mm*), just grown-up conversation was missing and (p) although my husband is lovely, you get kind of bored of talking to him just alone (*I: yeah yeah*). I mean you get bored talking to other housewives, other um you know mums because they ONLY talk about children or husbands or clothes or shopping (*I: mm*). And I just find that a bit boring (*I: mm*) and uninspiring so I just felt like I need to get out (*I: OK*) and have my own life as well as being a mother, which is lovely...I'm full of energy at the weekend. We do lots of things together on the weekend (*I: OK*), go to like forest, park, um and I you know try to like REALLY REALLY listen to them and play with them (*I: mm*) and I do like that too (*I: OK*). Yeah so yes I recommend all mothers to work (chuckles) (*I: OK*), yeah unless (p) children have some problems obviously (*I: mm*).

Yoko's talk underscores the perceived limitations of being a stay-home mother, which was portrayed as living an insular life, confined to the family. As seen in her previous account, having her own identity continued to emerge as a dominant factor, which affected her decision towards her employment. This engagement in another arena outside motherhood was also depicted as having a positive impact on her mothering, enabling her to devote her time and energy to her children when she was not working. Thus, as a working mother she portrayed herself as being able to offer quality time for her children, “REALLY REALLY listening to them and playing with them”.

7.2.3 The Challenges of Working Mothers: Discourse of Limited Time for Their Children

Whilst employment was depicted positively by most of the working mothers (13/15), the limited time mothers could spend with their children was dominantly described as the major downside: “I wish I could use more of my time for the children.” (Misa); “The negative side of a working mother is if you work, you have less time for your children” (Lucy); “A disadvantage of working is spending less time with the kids...I wish I could more,” (Tomomi). In a similar vein, the talk of Yoko revealed the emotional ambivalence working mothers encountered:

I do feel like I don't see them enough sometimes, I can't go to all of their school trips (*I*: mm-hmm), which children hate. And uh I also (p) um feel like I don't know everything about them, what's going on (*I*: mm). But then I'm a believer of um just letting them grow on their own so I don't want to be stuck on my kids (*I*: mm) like some mothers are and I just want them to have their own life (*I*: mm), apart from us and let's get on with it basically and just kind of be tough and sort your problems out if you can by yourselves (*I*: mm-hmm), (P) but I do still feel guilty at times (chuckles) yeah you know working full-time Monday to Friday and, if they say “Oh, I wish you could pick me up from school or I wish you could drop me off or I wish I could just stay at home with you today” stuff like that, then I feel really guilty (chuckles) (*I*: yeah).

As is evident from Yoko's talk, employed mothers experienced feelings of guilt or a desire to spend more time with their children, concurrent with their inclination towards work. While they recognised the importance of having their own identity without getting “stuck on” their kids in conjunction with the value of their children developing their own identity as individuals, they were also torn by the moral demands of motherhood. This kind of emotional dilemma that working mothers encountered is particularly visible in the following accounts of two mothers. For example, the talk of Harumi, a Japanese mother of one child and a full-time research student who came to England about six months ago, vividly described the challenges of being a working mother:

Disadvantages of working full-time are time has become very limited for me (*I: mm-hmm*). I have to keep some time for my child, such as sending off to and picking up from school, making ‘nutritious’ food, trying to avoid junk foods but often fail and eat at McDonalds (*I chuckle*). I had a bad experience in devoting too much time to work (*I: OK*) and my child became a little bit mentally unstable, such as crying often, clinging to me all the time (*I: all right*). So I am trying to spend more time with her (*I: mm*) although it is quite limited.

The imagery of a busy working mother trying to juggle two demanding tasks is evocative here. Also, the challenges of maintaining a fine balance between full-time study and motherhood are markedly notable; despite her conscientious effort, Harumi and her daughter often ended up eating at McDonalds. Interestingly, Harumi’s account also displayed her perturbation about her daughter’s psychological security, similar to home-stay mothers (e.g. “my child became a little bit mentally unstable”). This apprehension of the emotional disturbance of their children is even more highlighted in the account of Hojin, a Korean mother of two children aged three and one. Hojin initially came to England to study fashion more than ten years ago. However, after meeting her Korean husband she gave up studying mainly due to the financial strain. They went back to Korea, got married, but returned to England nine years ago to have a better life. Soon after coming to England, Hojin gave birth to her first child and stayed at home to care for him. Then, two years later her second child followed. However, after having the second one, Hojin started her catering business in order to establish financial security for her children in the future, mainly because of her experience of having been brought up in an environment where there was no financial stability. Hojin’s account shows a strong sense of the guilt she felt towards her children as a result of working full-time, leaving her children little time with their parents:

Int: What are the advantages and disadvantages of a working mother?

Hojin: Feelings of sorrow to my children are bigger than anything else. Because to be honest my children are still babies (*I: mm-hmm*), spending lots of time with mum and dad is important for the children. So I don’t feel any merits (of working) so far. Of course advantages are, not really advantages, just I can earn money and

provide better environment for my children. But, in fact, that's just what I want and that's just our plan as a married couple. From my children's point of view, there is nothing good about it for now. Because it's a period when they should spend a lot of time with parents for their emotional stability, but I can't take them out to play often so I only have feelings of sorrow to them.

According to Hojin's account, not being able to spend enough time with her young children was depicted as having a negative impact on her children emotionally; despite the importance of "spending a lot of time with parents for their emotional security", her children were represented as being impoverished of their parents' time and attention. Thus, working while her children were young, even if it was to provide a better future for her children, was described as having no positive aspects; "there is nothing good about it for now". In this sense, Hojin's discourse was child-centred, showing more resemblance to that of home-stay mothers than the majority of employed mothers.

7.3 Conclusion

As demonstrated so far, the discourse of most working mothers showed a notable difference from that of stay-home mothers although the minority of employed mothers, especially those from Korea and Japan, also expressed their concerns about the emotional stability of their children. Whereas the accounts of stay-home mothers depicted the mother's constant presence for their children's needs as most important, those of employed mothers displayed their desire and needs to have an outlet from having a singular identity, although some constructed their reason for paid work as also good for their children. For working mothers having a different arena other than motherhood was described as beneficial for the way mothers felt about themselves, providing them with the opportunity to socialise with other people. Additionally, having another dimension in life was portrayed as helping mothers engage in mothering in a better way by alleviating the satiated feelings of full-time childcare. In this sense, work outside the home was portrayed as a respite from the demands and drudgery of childcare. Conversely, staying at home full-time was represented as almost "unhealthy" for mothers with no channel for freeing them from the monotonous tasks of childcare. In addition, the discourse of working mothers was not

ridden with anxiety about their children's psychological health except two mothers from Japan and Korea (e.g. Harumi and Hojin). Although the discourse of some working mothers was indicative of a lack of time given to their children and a sense of guilt, the perceived merits of employment seemed to override its pitfalls for the majority of working mothers.

On the other hand, both home-stay mothers and employed mothers can arguably be seen as sharing the child-centred discourse: whilst mothers' own happiness and identity was described as being as important as their children's for many working mothers, children were often depicted as needing more than basic sustenance (for instance, Hua and Ping talked about providing extra educational activities for their children). Moreover, discourse around their employment was often constructed as benefiting their children, e.g. enabling them to be independent. Also, when a mother (e.g. Hojin) expressed her sadness, it was because she understood her situation from the perspective of her young children, not her own. In this sense, despite her engagement with full-time work, she continued to support the child-centred idea. Drawing on these, all mothers in my sample, regardless of their national or ethnic origin and employment status, were *arguably* subject to gendered ideologies and practices although the Chinese women in this chapter appear to be distinct. For instance, even when men took the major caring role, women continued to feel guilty or feel the need to justify their employment. With regard to the cases of mothers from China, in spite of what can be seen as the impact of Chairman Mao's ideology advocating gender equality and evidence of some men making a considerable contribution to household labour, the gender divided relations seemed to have a persistent effect on the lives of Chinese women. Even if they engaged in paid work like their husbands, it was predominantly women who reduced their working hours to look after children, not men. Thus, even if employed mothers did not conform to the Confucian traditional gender norm in the sense that they were involved in economic activity outside the home like their husband, this did not extend to the idea of gender equality. Drawing on these, it can be argued that working mothers were also emotionally strained, to varying degrees, by the demands of the gender biased 'good' mothering ideology, similar to their home-stay counterparts.

Consistent with the findings in chapters 5 and 6, diversity in East Asian women's

biographical factors did not seem to play a significant part in the construction of women's understanding of motherhood and employment. For example, both stories of Jia, who had lived in England for three years, and Ping, who had lived in England for 20 years, demonstrated strong support for women's labour market participation and less for intensive mothering, commonly identified among the accounts of mothers from China. Rather, the notable component in this appears to be their motherhood ideology, which is influenced by their perceived national and/or ethnic cultural heritage.

Chapter 8. Discussion and Conclusion

How has their national and/or ethnic cultural heritage affected the experiences and identity construction of first generation East Asian mothers living in England? What does it mean to be a mother in a transnational setting? How have gender relations within the family been reconfigured in diasporic space? I set out to answer the above questions by examining the biographical interview data of 30 first generation East Asian women with dependent children residing in England. Through the close investigation of accounts of first generation East Asian mothers, this research has particularly been concerned with individual women's experiences of mothering in terms of the division of labour within the family as well as the ways in which their motherhood ideologies appear to have affected their decisions towards childcare and employment. Considering the lacuna in existing literature in understanding the lives of East Asian women in England, this study provides a valuable insight into their similar yet heterogeneous experiences as migrant mothers.

The main aim of this study was to explore if and how first generation East Asian mothers perceive their national and/or ethnic cultural heritage to affect their motherhood experiences and identity formation in England. In order to achieve this aim, three main objectives were set. The first objective of this study was to examine if they perceive their national and/or ethnic cultural heritage to have shaped their motherhood ideology, and if so how they represent this impacting on their experiences of motherhood and employment in England. This objective was achieved in chapters 6 and 7. The findings indicated that individual women perceived that their national and/or ethnic cultural heritage were significant in their experiences of motherhood. As a result, this appeared to have a different impact on mothers' decisions towards childcare and employment depending on their country of origins. For instance, the majority of Korean mothers that I interviewed chose to stay at home to look after their children, justifying their decision by linking it back to their perception of Korean cultural norms; by comparison, the majority of mothers from China were engaged in paid work in England, again referring to their cultural heritage but this time in reference to the need for all working age adults to work. The second objective of this study was to investigate if and how their husbands' ethnicity is perceived to influence household labour within their family in England. This objective was achieved in chapter 5.

The data presented in this chapter suggested that their husbands' ethnicity was perceived to affect the gendered division of labour within the family. In particular, women married to men of East Asian origin tended to play a more gender biased role, regardless of their employment status, taking the major caring responsibility in the house. This meant the majority of Korean and many Chinese mothers who got married to men of East Asian heritage played the role of primary carer, whilst many Japanese women who were married to British men showed their engagement in more divergent patterns of gendered household labour. This is almost contrary to the typical description of Japanese women living in Japan, commonly identified in much existing literature. The third objective was to study how individual identity emerges through the intersection of motherhood identity with their ethnicity and class. This objective was achieved in chapters 6 and 7. The findings suggested that the intersection illustrated similar experiences shared by mothers but also illuminated variability, depending on individual contexts including household income. For example, in chapter 6 the varied accounts of Han and Minju, whose household incomes showed substantial differences, illustrated the heterogeneous ways of talking about intensive mothering among at-home mothers.

In the remaining section of this final chapter I will attempt to draw together the main findings of this study through in-depth discussions of the data in relation to existing literature and theories. These include the divergent patterns of the gendered division of household labour in a diasporic setting; the possible impacts of motherhood ideology; and the intersection of motherhood with ethnicity and class. The final section presents my reflections on the research overall, its limitations and recommendations for future studies.

8.1 Divergent Patterns of Gendered Division of Household Labour in a Diasporic Setting

As I demonstrated in chapter 5, whilst for the vast majority of people the gendered division of labour remained relatively firm among many East Asian women and men in England, the discourse of a minority of mothers suggested a more equal division of household labour. Drawing on this, the gender division of household labour talked about among first generation East Asian mothers in my study can be categorised into three: those who

managed to negotiate their role with their husbands and redefine the gender 'norm' within transnational space; those who managed to negotiate their gender role to some extent yet maintained the conventional form of gender relations; and those who firmly retained the traditional gendered norms and roles.

8.1.1 Challenging and Redefining the Gender 'Norm': Creating New Meanings

The research reviewed in chapters 2 and 3 indicated that gender divided beliefs and practices are perpetuated among East Asian countries. While all East Asian countries are thought to share similar patterns of gendered relations (Yuen-Tsang 1997; Hirao 2001; Zuo and Bian 2001; Won and Pascall 2004; Kim 2005), such gender segregation seems to be even more deeply entrenched in Japan and South Korea than Chinese societies, despite some evidence suggesting the increasing involvement of younger generations of Korean and Japanese fathers in childcare and domestic work (Lee and Han 1998; Sagara 1998; Yoon and Chung 1999; Ishii-Kuntz et al. 2004). Given this, it is interesting that all three mothers who reportedly practised equal or even less sharing of domestic labour with their husbands were of Japanese origin. The accounts of these women suggested their awareness of the 'norm' in Japan where men's participation in the domestic sphere was often rare, based on a clear separation between men's role as an economic provider and women's role as a care provider at home. However, in their stories their marriage to British men enabled them to redefine the gender 'norm', although this might not entirely have been the case for Tomomi, whose unemployed husband was grudgingly taking the primary caring role; for them it may be that physical separation from their homeland offered an avenue to negotiate their gender role with their husbands and practise what they considered to be the 'norm' in England. In this sense, new possibilities for them in terms of identity emerged through the mixing of different ethnic backgrounds and cultures (i.e. Japanese and British). Within diasporic space these women used their agency in negotiating divergent beliefs and practices with their husbands breaking away from the traditional role division. This was also identified in the experiences of Japanese migrant women in Britain in previous research (Izuhara and Shibato 2002). This suggests that these couples were exercising gender equal relationships, rather than the unequal gender relations of 'hegemonic

masculinity’ and ‘emphasised femininity’ based on Confucian patriarchal ideals (Cho 2008).

However, despite their perception of England as a more egalitarian society than Japan and British men as more egalitarian than Japanese men, gendered norms lurking in Western societies, such as Britain, continued to affect the diasporic experience of some women like Tomomi. In her stories presented in chapter 5 Tomomi expressed her surprise at the conservative attitudes of her British husband, who stayed at home looking after their children while she worked full-time. Whilst Tomomi did not put the following forward in her own story, I draw on the literature to support this more nuanced interpretation of what she said. Unlike Tomomi’s different expectations of British men from Japanese men, a bulk of existing Western literature has shown the pervasive characteristics of gender segregated relations, firmly inscribed in everyday lives in Western societies (e.g., Hochschild 1989; Uttal and Tuominen 1999; Gregory and Milner 2008; Kitterod and Pettersen 2009; van Hoof 2011). In particular, different expectations placed on men and women in terms of household labour (e.g. Deutsch and Saxon 1998; Riggs 1997, 1998, 2005) illuminate the *de facto* reality of developed Western countries. Although I cannot draw a firm conclusion from the stories of East Asian women in my study alone that Confucian patriarchal ideals are definitively more gender divided, their stories seem to be suggestive of their greater expectation of equality with British men.

8.1.2 Limited Participation of Men in Domestic Labour and the Continuation of Gendered Relations

Within this discourse men participated in domestic work at a limited level. Migration might have contributed to this pattern of gender relations to some extent as a result of some women’s marriage to British men (e.g. Sook, Asuko, Mika, Kyoko, Bian and Lang) and/or due to the practical needs of couples as they did not have any other familial support networks (e.g. Ping, Fei, Chen, Miri, Asuko and Bian). However, despite men’s participation in domestic labour, the interview data indicates the continuation of both men’s and women’s beliefs and attitudes towards gendered role division among these couples. In addition, consistent with the findings of both Western and Eastern literature,

predominant accounts of East Asian mothers in my study suggest that the majority of women maintained their beliefs in and practices of what Connell (1987) called ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘emphasised femininity’, but in a form that the interviewees identified as embedded in the culture of their country of origin. Hence, most of the time women took the main responsibility for domestic labour while men played a subsidiary role, regardless of women’s employment situations. Meanwhile, it is interesting that the ethnic composition of husbands in this group is 50 per cent British and 50 per cent East Asian. This seems to reflect the findings of the majority of existing studies carried out both in Western and Eastern countries. As examined in chapter 2, previous research indicates that the gendered norms continue to affect both Western and East Asian countries, despite some signs of improvement in gender relations. Whilst the accounts of the majority of mothers were suggestive of the changing attitudes of men and women in terms of gender role, such change appeared to be limited, similar to paramount suggestions of much literature. For instance, the employment patterns of men and women in this group – i.e. 13 out of 16 men worked full-time whereas only three women worked full-time – were in line with the common notion of the male breadwinner and female care provider. In relation to this, the perception of many women appeared to be gendered, to the extent that they were accepting this kind of role division as the ‘norm’. For them financial provision is what men are primarily supposed to do (‘hegemonic masculinity’) whilst caring is what women are principally supposed to do (‘emphasised femininity’). In particular, the accounts of some women indicated their beliefs in intrinsic differences between men and women: e.g. women are ‘naturally’ better at housework or childcare than men. As a result, men who made a contribution to household labour in whatever degrees or forms were mostly described in a favourable way.

Compared to the discourse of challenging the gender ‘norm’, the ethnic origins of their husbands appeared to have a less significant effect on the gendered division of household work within this discourse. Also, as seen in the cases of Hailey and Han in chapter 5, there is evidence of some women resisting the conventional Confucian form of gendered labour, in which men are expected to do nothing in the house (Kim 2005). Nonetheless, their other accounts demonstrated strongly gendered beliefs, espousing the traditional image of the father who ensures the financial security of the family as well as moral authority in reference to the culture of their country of origin (for instance, Han mentioned how she

constantly told her husband to show a somewhat formal and standardised ‘good’ image of a father to their son even if it may be a bit faked). This indicates their gender biased views and the continuing legacy of Confucian family ideals (Kim 2001). In this sense, these women’s involvement in ‘resistant femininity’ and the reformulation of gender relations in a transnational setting appeared to be, at the time of interview, limited by their understandings of the expectations of their culture of origin.

8.1.3 Women as a Sole Carer: Legacy of Confucian Patriarchal Ideology and Its Perceived Impact on the Gendered Division of Household Work

Chapter 5 highlighted that the conventional gender divided belief appeared to be more prevalent and deeply entrenched amongst respondents with husbands of East Asian origin than those with husbands of British heritage. The dominant majority of women (ten out of 11), whose talk displayed that they took almost exclusive responsibilities for domestic duties, were married to East Asian men. This may indicate that the practices of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘emphasised femininity’ are even more predominant in East Asian couples as a consequence of the influential role that Confucian patriarchal ideologies play in the experiences of interviewees, similar to the findings of Sung (2003). In this regard, their migration did not seem to have any major impact on gendered beliefs and the way gender role was practised, with these women’s stories indicating that they and their husbands still strongly uphold a traditional gender viewpoint. For these women their perceived cultural heritage was presented as a concrete reality that had a tangible effect on their everyday lives.

This is to some extent consonant with the findings of Lee (2005) and Ho (2006), which indicated the continuing gendered division of labour within the family among East Asian migrant couples. Alongside the gendered ideology couples held, this should also be understood within the context of the financial circumstances of the family and their social position as migrants. As seen in the examples of Lee (2005), the gendered status quo in the home was more easily retained among families who were able to live on the sole income of a male breadwinner than those who needed women’s financial contribution (e.g. seven out

of ten women in this group were home-stay mothers). In addition, consistent with middle-class migrant Chinese women in Australia who participated in the research of Ho (2006), the gender segregation among these couples might have been aggravated by their move to another country, as migration often involves downward occupational mobility and the loss of support from families, in conjunction with couples' needs to facilitate settlement of young children in a new country. For example, the narrative of Seyoun, a home-stay mother who worked as a teacher in Korea, indicated her strong espousal of an intensive mothering role for her children's emotional stability (chapter 6). However, her decision to stay home after moving to England might also have been affected by her relatively precarious employment situation in England as she was unlikely to be able to use her Korean teaching qualification in British schools. Her decision to stay home might additionally have been affected by the issues regarding her two Korean-born children's adjustment in English schools; given that they had to start using English as their main language at school, she might have felt the need to stay at home more to help her children's settlement, similar to some Chinese migrant mothers in the work of Ho (2006). Without doubt, this had significant implications for the gendered role division within the family since she became a housewife, taking the major responsibility for looking after her household and her children.

However, highly gendered relations might also have persisted to affect employed women who had to take the double burden, as seen in the examples of full-time working mothers in chapter 7 (e.g. Hua and Jia). This seems to share commonalities with some of the findings of Lim (1997), which pointed out that the East Asian women in her study continued to support the gendered 'norm' in the country of origin despite some shifts in their beliefs and attitudes after migration; simultaneously, some East Asian men were resistant to changes in their gender role in a new country even if their wives worked. Lim suggested that women might be aware of gender inequality at home and their right to demand their husbands' contribution to household labour, but did not challenge it in their everyday lives, often resigning themselves to gender disparity at home.

Additional to this, Korean couples emerged as the ones who held the traditional gender notion most firmly among the discourse of women taking sole responsibilities for household labour: seven out of ten, whose accounts were indicative of strong gender norms,

were Korean couples. This is in a sense consistent with the suggestions of most of literature on research involving Korean mothers (e.g. Sung 2003; Won and Pascall 2004; Kim 2005; Pascall and Sung 2007). Also, a few scholarly works have suggested that the influence of Confucianism is immensely strong in South Korea and thus it is impossible to understand 'Korean culture' without understanding Confucian traditions (Gelb and Palley 1994; Pascall and Sung 2007). Furthermore, the majority of the participants were living in a relatively small Korean community in Surrey, which meant that many families might have found it easy to maintain the supposedly 'Korean way' of life in England. The stories told to me in this research, therefore, imply that such a legacy continues to have a lasting impact on Korean people's lives even outside Korea, especially between Korean couples.

In terms of Japanese women, their discourse was predominantly suggestive of practices of sharing. This is in fact contradictory to the majority of existing Japanese literature (White 1987; Allison 1991; Brinton et al. 2001; Hirao 2001). Considering that a couple of interviewees represented Japanese men as strongly gender biased within the household, this might be because most of their husbands were British (eight out of ten). This again reinforces the findings of my research, which suggests that women see the ethnic origins of their husbands as a significant factor affecting gender relations within their family.

With regard to Chinese mothers, although many of them responded that their husbands shared household labour (seven out of ten), the in-depth reading of their accounts showed its limited characteristics. Relating to this, some interesting pictures emerged especially from the talk of mothers from mainland China, where there was a strong work ethic that they attributed to the pervasive work orientated culture in China that can be linked to Chairman Mao's Communism. In reference to this, interviewees talked of how not only men but also women were encouraged to go out and work rather than stay at home looking after the family. In this sense, it could be argued that the compulsion to work appears stronger for these Chinese women than for the Western women discussed by Hays (1996) and others. However, in-depth analysis of the data suggested that despite this prevalent participation in economic activity, most of the Chinese mothers in my study appeared to be involved in gender divided practices in the home. Indeed, as seen in chapter 5, there was no evidence that Chinese men and women practised household labour in an egalitarian manner. Although many of them suggested that their husbands did a lot in the house,

women still tended to take the prime caring role within the family even if they also worked full-time. In addition, the talk of two Chinese mothers with Chinese husbands suggested that men continued to disengage in domestic duties, despite the fact that their wives were in full-time employment, resulting in women taking a double burden, as Liu (2008) claimed. Hence, consistent with the argument put forward by Rofel (1999), Chinese women in my study continued to be subject to the normalised notions of masculinity and femininity, strongly supported by the apparent cultural impacts of the Communist government even outside China. This suggests how the mixing of Communism with a longer legacy of Confucianism impacts on the experiences of Chinese women in England. This is also a good illustration of the complexity of how women try to make sense of their lives when mothering, paid work and culture intersect. Whilst the interviewees refer to the work culture in China, I am drawing on the literature to provide additional analysis with reference to a legacy of patriarchal Communism and Confucianism (Croll 1983).

In the meantime, as discussed in chapter 5, other biographical facets of mothers – for example, the age range of and number of children, the length of the mother's stay in England or main purpose of coming to England - did not seem to have any notable impact on gendered relations, compared to the ethnic composition of their husbands. Although women's employment status had a certain degree of influence, especially for those who challenged the gender norms, it did not seem always the case (there were quite a few couples who both worked full-time but women almost took sole responsibility for childcare and domestic work). This appears to confirm the women's own stories about their husband's ethnic origin, and their joint cultural heritage in terms of gender relations is a key to understanding the division of labour within their family.

8.2 The Possible Impact of Motherhood Ideology

As examined in chapters 6 and 7, the motherhood ideology of individual women came out as a most crucial component affecting women's decisions towards childcare and employment. However, similar to the findings of Johnston and Swanson (2006, 2007), not every woman in my study shared the same mode of motherhood ideology. Indeed, different national and/or ethnic cultural heritage seemed to have diverse effect on these women's

experiences. On the other hand, despite this divergence, all women seemed to be subject to the gendered notion of motherhood ideology. Drawing on these, this section discusses the outcomes of the data extensively in relation to existing studies.

8.2.1 Divergence in Motherhood Ideology

The findings presented in chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate how different national, ethnic cultural backgrounds affected the construction of motherhood ideology and their employment patterns differently. Whilst an intensive mothering ideology, which supports the incessant presence and availability of mothers for their children, is considered to be a dominant mode of beliefs in developed Western societies, heterogeneous forms of mothering ideology also exist for women from different cultural milieux, as Hill-Collins (1994) and Segura (1994) suggested. For instance, the findings of Duncan and Edwards (1999) indicated that compared to many white British single mothers who believed ‘good’ mothers should stay at home and devote their time to childcare, mothers of African-Caribbean heritage in the UK tended to consider paid work as a part of ‘good’ mothering practices, due to their subjection to different cultural beliefs and practices (see also Duncan et al. 2003). The findings of my study can also be discussed in this light: that is, the stories of the majority of Korean and some Japanese mothers could be seen as the reflection of their perceived cultural heritages, which impose on women to withdraw from the labour market once they get married and have children, as identified in much East Asian literature (White 1987; Allison 1991; Hirao 2001; Kim 2005). On the contrary, the portrayal of experiences of the majority of mothers from China could be interpreted as the legacy of their perceived Communist work ethic, which strongly encouraged women’s involvement in the economic sphere, whether they had children or not (Yuen-Tsang 1997). As Hattery (2001) proposed, this simultaneously illustrates the significant and often direct impact of mothering ideology on women’s decisions towards their employment and the way they evaluate the outcome of their choice. Hence, when women talked about their employment trajectory, the narratives of home-stay mothers, such as Minju and Han, were centred on their beliefs about the importance of being there for their children, providing not only physical but emotional love that can ensure the healthy development of their children. This was similar to the findings of Johnston and Swanson (2006, 2007) in the USA but was represented by the mothers as linked to their cultural roots where Confucian patriarchal

ideologies dominate (Cho 2008). For these women, such emphasis on mother's care seemed to override other socio-economic factors, such as financial needs. Thus, even if some mothers, such as Minju and Asuko, experienced some degree of financial strain, for them being there for their children, meeting their emotional needs was more important than providing for them economically, similar to some white mothers in the study of Duncan and Edwards (1999). In contrast, the discourse of working mothers is similar to the majority of Western literature on employed mothers (Vincent et al. 2004; Johnston and Swanson 2006, 2007). For example, in the stories working mothers told in my study: mother's individual identity was important as much as motherhood; mother's work benefited mothers as well as children. In this regard, the majority of employed mothers, especially those from China, tended to construct their narratives and discourse around the merits of having a job outside home and its beneficial effect on themselves as well as their children. Rather than being preoccupied with concerns about the psychological wellbeing of their children when mothers were not available full-time, they focused on other aspects, dissimilar to the accounts of the majority of home-stay mothers (see also Johnston and Swanson 2006, 2007).

What was also noticeable from the accounts of East Asian mothers in my study was their engagement in the 'othering' of mothers with different employment status, analogous with the findings of Johnston and Swanson (2004, 2006). For instance, employed mothers were frequently described by home-stay mothers as not being able to provide sufficient time and emotional security for their children; on the other hand, home-stay mothers were often portrayed by working mothers as having an insular way of life, confined to the narrow sphere of the home and their children, and having less opportunities to offer a broader view of society to their children that working mothers could. For many mothers the boundary drawing played a crucial part in their story telling to define who they were within the particular time and space as either home-stay mothers or working mothers. This may be a mechanism they are using to make sense of their current position and choice for the interviewer as well as for themselves. This also reflects the contemporary social situations of both Eastern and Western societies where conflicting demands of employment and care are imposed on women, as suggested by Hirao (2001) and Hays (1996). With the process of modernisation and industrialisation, the existing literature indicates that women's participation in paid work has been encouraged in both societies; but, simultaneously this

change has not come with gender equality within the household and thus women continue to be affected by the expectation placed on them as main carers (Brinton et al. 2004; Mannino and Deutsch 2007; Pascall and Sung 2007). This puts a double strain on women as well as creating conflicts among women with different work status (Hays 1996).

8.2.2 The Persistent Impact of ‘Gendered’ Motherhood Ideology

Despite marked differences in discourse around ‘good’ mothering and employment between home-stay mothers and employed mothers, the gendered understanding of role division seemed to have a persistent effect on the predominant majority of women in my study, regardless of their employment status. My findings clearly illuminated that women’s full participation in the labour market did not eliminate gendered norms and practices among many participants. Under the veneer of divergence, both home-stay and employed mothers’ stories indicated that they persisted in utilising and/or being the target of the gendered understanding of women’s role within the family (i.e. ‘emphasised femininity’). Although a small minority of women expressed the egalitarian sharing of housework and childcare as discussed previously, the majority of women remained to be the primary care provider irrespective of whether they were employed. Also, some employed mothers expressed a sense of the guilt that they felt towards their children, which signifies the continuing influence of gender norms on these women.

Whilst there emerged a similar pattern among the discourse of many working mothers, the talk of mothers from China alluded to what was seen as the unique cultural and political context of China, where women were expected to participate in the labour market, irrespective of having children, as discussed above. In this the support of the family was described as crucial for women with children to be able to maintain their participation in paid work although only two mothers were able to avail themselves of the familial assistance when they were in England. This kind of deeply entrenched cultural heritage seemed to have a resounding influence on the lives of mothers from China in this study. Despite their lives outside China for a lengthy period of time, these women continued to refer back to their perceived Chinese work ethic under which they were brought up, in the same way home-stay mothers from other nations retained their putative cultural heritage in supporting the notion of caring for the family as women’s main place in society.

It is perhaps a reflection of this that the majority of mothers from China in my study were engaged in paid work. However, their involvement in paid work did not seem to have brought gender equality, consistent with other existing studies of the experiences of working mothers in China (e.g. Yuen-Tsang 1997; Rofel 1999). Yuen-Tsang (1997) proposed that the Communist advocacy of gender equality through women's participation in the labour force did not match with the reality of women in China. Similarly, the narratives of Hua and Ping suggested that these women's participation in the labour market did not exempt them from carrying out the majority of childcare responsibilities, especially with regard to their children's education. It was therefore Hua who arranged and took charge of her daughter's after-school activities, such as piano lessons and swimming, as well as overseeing her daughter's piano practice on a regular basis. Ping also mentioned taking her child to extra school activities, such as Chinese classes, at the weekend. This also raises questions regarding intensive child rearing. Whilst childcare was constructed as something that can be carried out by those other than mothers in the accounts of the majority of Chinese mothers, this did not appear to prevent the idea of offering intense care for the children. In a sense, this does not seem to differ that much from the idea of Western intensive mothering, in which children receive an almost unlimited amount of love and care from mothers, often accompanied by a huge amount of time and financial resources, except that childcare was constructed as replaceable by others. This is consistent with the assertion of Hays (1996) that her employed respondents were involved in mothering practices that are equally child-centred, physically and mentally demanding, and financially expensive as her stay-home participants.

8.2.3 Intensive Mothering Ideology for East Asian Mothers in England

My data also showed a lot of commonalities with the intensive mothering ideology dominant in developed Western societies proposed by Hays (1996), Vincent et al. (2004) and Wall (2010). These included supporting the idea of the incessant presence and availability of a mother for her children; in this, children's needs took prominence over the mother's needs as an individual; also, intensive mothering was often conceptualised around

the notion of enhancing the physical, emotional and intellectual ability of children by taking them to various activities. Whilst it is often difficult to separate out which ideology is most influential for East Asian women in my study (Confucianism or Western intensive mothering ideology) as they appear to be the same on the surface, there seem to be subtle differences between them drawing on existing literature in Western and East Asian communities. Based on her investigation of the historical development of intensive mothering in developed Western societies, Hays (1996) argued that the contemporary ideology of intensive mothering is derived from the idea of a dependent and innocent child whose happiness is considered to be the ultimate goal of ‘good’ mothering. Vincent et al. (2004) and Wall (2010) additionally suggested that Western forms of intensive mothering are constructed around the idea of developing children’s emotional, physical and cognitive potential through carefully organised activities and expert guided childcare methods. Within this construction children are not treated in terms of their economic productivity or as assets of the nation, who can contribute to the national productivity in the future, which is specifically identified among Japanese literature (Hirao 2001). Whilst it has been argued that to some extent Western notions of child rearing have affected East Asian countries (see Hirao 2001), Rofel’s (1999) work indicated that it is also important to stress that different beliefs and ideological systems have shaped the experiences of people in the West and East Asia differently (e.g. Protestantism vs Confucianism), as well as affecting individual countries within the West and East Asia differently. From this perspective, the development of an intensive mothering ideology for Western countries, such as the USA and Britain, can *arguably* be different from East Asian countries.

As illustrated by existing studies, the influence of Confucian patriarchal ideals is perpetuated among East Asian countries (Pascall and Sung 2007). Within the Confucian patriarchal system married women are expected to stay at home and look after the family as a wife and a mother. In this regard, the idea of the staying-at-home mother who devotes herself to raising her dependent children is not new. However, unlike the Western belief that places the individual freedom and happiness of children as the ultimate goal of ‘good’ mothering, Confucian ideals place more emphasis on communitarian values over individual ones (Inoguchi and Shin 2009): for instance, a child’s academic achievement is often seen as the success of the family as a whole, not just as a means to securing the happy future of the individual child (Lee 2002), as pointed out in chapter 7. Whilst Rofel

(1999) argued that individualist ideas are increasingly spreading in East Asian countries as a result of the modernisation of and the Western influence on these countries, modernity should not be seen as the universalising process founded on Euro-American ideals; instead, it should be understood as a process developed in a specific socio, economic, political and cultural context. Reflecting this, Pascall and Sung (2007) pointed out that modernity and tradition continue to coexist in East Asian communities. Hence, even if the child rearing approach taken in East Asian contexts appears to be purely centred on the individual child's needs and desires over anyone else on the surface, children are also expected to fulfill their duties in return by studying hard and obeying their parents.

In addition, even if the enhancement of the intellectual ability of children for future life is an important part of both Eastern and Western intensive mothering, there might be differences in the extent that it is emphasised within the two contexts. As stated above, Hays (1996) noted that Western forms of intensive motherhood are founded on the idea of children's freedom and happiness. In a similar vein, the work of Wall (2010) highlighted that many middle-class Western mothers in her study equally valued other developmental aspects of children, such as happiness and self-esteem, alongside improving their intellectual capacity; in line with this, allowing children to have unstructured play time was also seen by some mothers as important for the development of their children. Compared to this, in East Asian contexts there might be more stress on children's intellectual development and their future academic performance. In this the idea of 'good' mothering is largely tied with the mother's role in the academic development and success of her children, as illustrated by existing East Asian literature (e.g. Hirao 2001; Chan 2008). My data also illuminated this: for instance, some East Asian mothers' accounts were indicative of the salience of the mother's role in supervising her children's education (e.g. Minju, Heji and Hua). The regimented style of education commonly identified among East Asian countries (Chau 2011) demands an immense amount of financial resources as well as the time and energy of mothers, who, the vast majority of the time, play the role of an organiser and supervisor for their children's education. In this respect, although there might be similarities between East Asian and Western settings, the existing literature and my data seem to indicate that East Asian intensive mothering might be more compulsive in character than Western intensive mothering.

On top of this, the meaning of intensive mothering for some East Asian women in my study might be different from their Western counterparts because of their migration. In other words, while the majority of home-stay mothers presented their beliefs in intensive mothering, the loss of employment status and a lack of familial support through migration might also have created even more intensification of their mothering role, identified in the study of Ho (2006). For example, Han (chapter 6), a Korean mother who used to have a professional job in Korea before having her child, decided to quit her job and stay at home looking after her child once he was born. Her narrative suggested this decision was made even before her migration to England, principally on the basis of her strong belief in the salience of the mothering role for the emotional security and development of the child; however, simultaneously her account regarding childcare and employment in England appeared to be ambiguous, indicating her perceived language barrier might also have played a part in her decision to stay at home. This might have consequences for her identity and mothering role as she was likely to direct all her energy towards raising a 'perfect child' (Pun et al. 2004: 287). Although the impact of losing her occupational status as a professional on her motherhood was not clear in her narrative, it might have ramifications of an even more intensified motherhood for her as she might have tried to compensate for her lost employment status through her mothering.

Apart from these, it can also be suggested that my participants were to some extent influenced by an intensive mothering ideology and practice commonly found in British middle-class families: for instance, as seen in chapter 7, some East Asian mothers were conscious of what is supposed to be the 'norm' in England and compared themselves with white British mothers. However, at the same time their accounts also showed that many mothers retained certain aspects of their perceived national and/or ethnic cultural heritage in raising their children. Although this clearly demonstrates the tie with their homeland, drawing on Beck (2000) it could be suggested that what is considered to be an East Asian way in a transnational setting is not the same as what it is in their home countries because it is 'imagined' and 'reconfigured' in a diasporic context. In this sense, the intensive mothering ideology for my participants may be a 'hybridised' form that is distinctive from the notions of intensive mothering existing in both East Asian countries and Britain.

8.3 Intersection of Motherhood with Ethnicity and Class

The findings of this study should be seen in light of the intersecting relations of gender with their ethnic and/or national and class backgrounds. Whilst these women might share similarities as ethnic minority females, their experiences are concurrently likely to differ owing to various individual and social factors. Even though the majority of the participants came from well educated middle-class backgrounds, their post-migration stories diverged due to various intersecting components. For instance, many women experienced the loss of employment despite their high qualifications owing to their and their husbands' gendered beliefs, unrecognised professional qualifications, lack of language skills and childcare responsibilities - especially because they could not receive help from their families or relatives. As examined in chapter 6, the loss of occupational status affected many home-stay mothers' confidence and self-worth while also having brought social isolation and loneliness, as elucidated by the story of Sook. In comparison, some women were able to continue to improve their skills and occupational opportunities by getting extra help from their parents or parents-in-law, as exemplified by Hua and Ping. In addition, some women's marriage to British men provided them with opportunities to recreate their life and engage in different ways of doing things from their country of origin. This was dissimilar to the majority of those who got married to East Asian men, whose life path did not diverge from the conventional way. For example, the stories of Yumi, Yoko and Tomomi, whose husbands were British, suggested more gender equal practices in their home, unlike suggestions of the existing Japanese literature. This was divergent from the stories of many other respondents with East Asian husbands (e.g. Jina, Minju, Hojin, Seyoun, Sunmi, Heji, Hua, Fang and Jia). Moreover, depending on women's financial circumstances, post-migration experiences of individual females were divergent, as examined in my previous work: for instance, Han, who had a substantial household income, did not need to worry about supporting her child financially and was able to enjoy her life in England by taking classes for hobbies or personal interests; whereas for Sunmi, who had a lower household income, financial strain was the main cause of her hardship in England (see also Lim 2011).

Apart from this, the analysis of the data suggested that an important factor in the interplay was their beliefs in 'good' mothering and womanhood, especially deriving from their

perceived cultural heritage. In this sense, their national and/or ethnic origin seems to be a salient component affecting their diasporic experiences, producing different attitudes towards employment and childcare. As a consequence, women from the same countries tended to show similar patterns in terms of their understanding of what it means to be a 'good' mother and a woman, particularly among mothers from Korea and China. Thus, the accounts of Korean mothers displayed a strong residue of what was commonly identified among Korean middle-class women in Korean literature, i.e. staying-at-home and taking the majority of household duties. Whether they migrated independently for self-realisation or dependently to accompany their husbands, Korean mothers in this research were more likely to forgo employment to look after children; even if they were economically active, the majority of the time (two out of three) the reasons for working were given as to meet the needs of the family, such as financial establishment for the family, rather than fulfilling an individual desire. By comparison, the majority of mothers from China tended to engage in paid work; and their accounts indicated that they were involved in employment not only for financial reasons but also for self-realisation or independence, irrespective of whether they migrated as dependents of their husbands (Hua, Ping, Jia and Lucy) or an independent (Lang). In the narratives of many Chinese mothers their paid work was frequently represented as an important part of their identity and 'what every healthy individual should do'.

In this the ethnic origin of their husbands arguably added another dimension to the interplay as it seems to have played a significant role in the gender experiences of East Asian women in my study. For instance, while there appeared to be considerable differences in their motherhood ideology and labour market participation between Chinese and Korean mothers, the former's involvement in domestic duties was not substantially different from the latter, as discussed previously. This is in a way consistent with existing literature on Korean women (e.g. Won and Pascall 2004; Kim 2005) and on the experiences of Chinese women, which is suggestive of the juxtaposed existence of conflicting gender notions and practices in China (e.g. Yuen-Chang 1997; Rofel 1999; Liu 2008). It is plausible to suggest that having husbands who share the same ethnic and/or national origin with themselves might have consolidated the continuation of the conventional gender beliefs and practices between couples, as illustrated in the stories of Korean and Chinese women in my study.

In a similar fashion, the ethnicity of husbands seems to have had a significant influence on the experiences of the Japanese mothers. The Japanese group, the majority of whom got married to white British men, told stories that seem to indicate the equal sharing of household labour or at least sharing with their husbands to some extent, rather than women taking all the household responsibilities. As pointed out in the previous section, this is inconsistent with the existing literature on the lives of Japanese women in Japan, who are largely subject to clearly gender divided roles and expectations (Hirao 2001; Yonemoto 2010). In this regard, migration and getting married to white British men appear to have enabled them to break the traditional gender 'norm' of their country of origin. Nevertheless, it was only a few Japanese women whose narratives were indicative of fundamental shifts in their gender practices at home. In addition, an intensive mothering ideology predominantly found among Japanese literature seems to have affected them continuously as many Japanese mothers in my study displayed similar tendencies to their Korean counterparts (e.g. worrying about their children's emotional stability due to their limited presence and availability). In this sense, their cultural values and practices continued to shape these women's lives.

East Asian women's affiliation with their ethnic and/or British communities or networks as well as their link with their country of origin might have been an additional interacting factor in gender relations and motherhood identity. With regard to the Japanese women, one stay-home mother of two children (Nanako), who came to England as a teenager to study and got married to a British man, claimed to have a network of British friends and felt closer to British culture(s) than Japanese. This indicates that having lived in and being schooled in England since her teenage years might have contributed to her sense of belonging to this country. In her case it is not clear though which cultural influence she had taken with regard to her decision to give up employment and stay at home because gendered relations and intensive mothering are found in the existing literature of both Western and Eastern societies. Meanwhile, the talk of the rest of the Japanese participants suggests their tie with Japanese organisations and other Japanese people in England as well as their connection with families in Japan. Whilst none of them lived in a tight-knit Japanese community, two women lived in an area which is relatively popular among Japanese people. Therefore, they were able to forge friendships with other Japanese

mothers living nearby as well as having regular contact with them. Also, if they did not live close to other Japanese people, they tended to take their children to a Saturday Japanese school so their children could stay in touch with the 'Japanese culture(s)'. For example, nearly half of the Japanese mothers (four) who lived in areas where not many Japanese lived told me that they took their children to a Japanese school every week. According to my participants, mothers talk to each other in the designated area for parents or go to cafes to socialise while waiting for their children. Furthermore, the majority of the Japanese mothers talked about visiting Japan with their children on a regular basis to see their families or their family members visiting them in England. This kind of affiliation with Japanese social networks and their close connection with their 'home' country is likely to have played a vital part in the lives of many Japanese women in my study as they are the avenue to bridge the gap of the physical distance from their homeland, partly allowing them to continue what was imagined as the 'Japanese way' of doing things. This is also indicative of these mothers' affinity with their cultural heritage and their endeavour to pass it onto their children. While I cannot make any firm claim, it is possible to speculate that the mingling of different constituents – i.e. women's ethnic and/or national heritage, the ethnic origin of husbands and their tie with either Japanese or British cultures and networks - might explain the inconsistent patterns of gender relations and motherhood ideology of Japanese women in this research.

The findings on Korean and Chinese mothers could also be fathomed in relation to their connection with ethnic and/or British communities and networks, together with their affinity with their countries of origin. All of my Korean participants either lived in or in close proximity to New Malden, known as a 'Korean Town'. Since most Korean products and services are available (e.g. children's private after-school institutions, hairdressers run by and for Koreans, Korean restaurants and supermarkets), the continuation of the 'Korean way' of life seems possible in this town. Additionally, my participants' talk suggested that in New Malden the celebrations of important national holidays, such as New Year's Day, are organised every year, with people wearing the traditional Korean costume, called *Hanbok*. Considering all these, it is highly likely that the retention of the supposedly 'Korean way' of doing things is relatively easier for Koreans living in this locality. In addition, living in an ethnic community is likely to reinforce women's socialisation with those of the same ethnicity: for example, during the interview a lot of Korean mothers told

me that they often socialised with other Korean mothers whose children were of a similar age to their own, such as regularly meeting in cafes and having lunch together. Through this process these women are likely to share their ideas and practices around childcare. In addition, most of the Korean mothers reported to go back to Korea as often as they could as well as having a regular contact with their families via phone. Given that Korean women emerged as the most conventional group in their narratives, their close link with the Korean community and families in Korea alongside their social networks with other Korean mothers appears to have been another crucial interplaying factor affecting their lives in England.

In a similar fashion, having a close affiliation with their ethnic community seems to have a significant impact on the experiences of the Chinese women, although the account of one mother (Lang), who gained a PhD in Britain and got married to a British man, indicated wide networks of friendships with not only Chinese but also other British people. As seen in chapter 5, Lang spent more time doing household labour, including childcare, than her husband even if she also worked full-time. Similar to Nanako's case discussed above, it is not evident which cultural influence shaped her gender relations at home, whether it was Chinese or British or both. My other Chinese participants seemed to have a strong connection with their community through their involvement in ethnic organisations and activities, such as a Saturday Chinese school for children and a traditional Chinese dancing class for adults, as well as their friendships with other Chinese women. As these suggest, their affinity with 'Chinese culture(s)' emerged as an important part of their lives: for instance, Hua, a full-time employed mother who also worked for the Chinese Association in Southampton on a voluntary basis, expressed how much she enjoyed and valued her commitment to the organisation. Moreover, many Chinese mothers' talk indicated their close tie with their families either in China or Hong Kong through regular visits and/or phone calls, similar to their Japanese and Korean counterparts. Drawing from these, it might be possible to suggest that their link with the local Chinese community and 'homeland' might have affected the ways in which they framed and understood motherhood and employment, as well as the gendered division of labour at home. This might be the reason why the narratives of Chinese women in my study are congruent with many existing studies of women in China, exposed to the contrasting ideologies and practices of gender (e.g. Yuen-Tsang 1997; Rofel 1999).

As discussed so far, these East Asian women's affiliation with their ethnic and/or British communities and social networks seem to have played a salient role in their disporic experiences, in particular their affinity with their ethnic groups as visible in the accounts of a clear majority of the participants. However, the timing of migration and the length of settlement in England did not seem to have a major impact on the majority of the women's acculturation process, except Nanako who claimed to feel more British than Japanese. For example, Minju came to Britain to improve her occupational skills and lived in England for 15 years. Her talk however was suggestive of the retention of the 'Korean way' of life; similarly, Chinese cultural beliefs and practices seem to have continued to shape the life of Ping, who came to England as a dependent of her Chinese husband and lived in England for 20 years. This might be because Nanako came to England before reaching adulthood and did a lot of her secondary socialisation in British school settings; on the other hand, all of the other mothers came to England as adults who grew up in East Asia for most of their lives.

In addition, the characteristics of individual migration seem to have had less obvious impact on the East Asian women's behaviour towards childcare and employment, alongside gender relations at home, especially compared to the findings of Lee et al. (2002). The study of Lee et al. (ibid.) underscored divergent implications of migration for women, depending on whether they migrated as dependents of their husbands or as independents to seek self-fulfillment. My findings however indicate that such implications are rather ambiguous with mixed patterns: some women (e.g. Harumi, Misa, Yumi, Yuko and Lang) who originally came to England to improve their skills or obtain higher educational qualifications continued to pursue their dream, either finding professional and administrative occupations or studying a postgraduate degree, as well as having relatively sharing gender relations with their husbands; on the other hand, this was not the case for other women (e.g. Minju, Heji, Mai, and Hailey) who all came to England on their own in order to develop their skills and improve their employability. Unlike their original intention, these women forwent their career ambition, taking highly gendered identity and roles as wife and mother, dissimilar to the independent migrant women in Lee et al.'s study (2002).

These varied factors have helped me to understand different patterns of gender relations

and women's behaviour towards motherhood and childcare. At the same time, the concept of intersectionality also enabled me to analyse the divergent and varied identity formation of individual women at different times and geographical spaces, as demonstrated in chapters 6 and 7. Thus, even though women shared the same gender, ethnic and class identities, individual experiences were unique in their own right, shifting throughout their life course. Meanwhile, although the majority of the women shared the similar class status, the way they constructed their motherhood ideology seemed to differ to some extent, depending on their financial situation. Obviously, defining class purely based on household income would be inappropriate given the discussion in chapter 3 (see Bradley 1996; Devine and Savage 2005). However, at the same time it is undeniable that economic resources have a direct and indirect impact on people's lives as they could impinge on other aspects of social life (Byrne 2006; Vincent et al. 2008; Taylor 2009; Armstrong 2010; Thomson et al. 2011). With reference to my interviewees, while some mothers were keen to carry on the intense educational practices of their country of origin, not everyone was able to do so due to financial strain. In this respect, household income (see comments in footnote)¹⁰ played an important part in understanding different patterns of child rearing among East Asian mothers. In addition, as seen in the stories of Minju and Han, differences in financial circumstances in interplaying with other factors, seemed to have a certain effect on the construction of an intensive mothering ideology among home-stay mothers. Thus, mothers who had limited financial resources, such as Minju and Asuko, tended to formulate intensive mothering around the notion of being there for their children, focusing less on a notion of 'quality time' and additional classes for a child that could require more financial resources; on the other hand, a relatively affluent mother like Han seemed to construct intensive mothering with the notion of proactively engaging in the maximisation of her child's emotional and intellectual potential.

It is also important to recognise that their agency played a crucial role in constructing their

¹⁰ It is noteworthy to stress that household income here is not used as synonymous with class. It is employed as a factor that might have contributed to the lived experiences of some women. Despite variation in household income and a certain degree of differences among individual mothers as discussed in this section, for the majority of my participants there were no noticeable differences between them in terms of classed behaviours. For instance, some mothers who reported to have a household income of less than or just around £20,000 p/a continued to send their children to private after-school lessons, which can typically be described as middle-class consumption in both British and East Asian contexts (see Chan 2008; Taylor 2009).

life and identity in England. For instance, in their stories mothers often represented decisions about employment and childcare as their ‘choice’. In addition, they were actively engaged in the construction of continuity in their stories even though they might have experienced ruptures and disjunctives (e.g. Minju and Han in chapter 6). However, it is also salient to note that, as discussed above, structural and cultural forces, such as gender and class, interplayed with their agency in producing distinctively individual experiences that are simultaneously gendered (see also The Personal Narratives Group 1989; Riessman 1993; Maynes et al. 2008).

Finally, the intersectionality highlights how the experiences of East Asian migrant women in my study might differ from other middle-class non-migrant women in England. As noted above, they were relatively privileged migrants who were able to use their middle-class positions to come to England, such as paying for expensive courses to gain professional qualifications and accompanying their expatriate husbands who had well-paid professional careers. However, their relatively advantageous class status did not necessarily prevent them from undergoing downward occupational mobility, as discussed above. In the process of migration some women lost their social positions as professionals, which they might have enjoyed in their previous country, due to unrecognised qualifications, the language barrier or racism (Lee 2005). For example, the story of Ping in chapter 7 highlighted how her move to England affected her life at the beginning of her migration due to the loss of her professional job, owing to her invalidated teaching qualification and poor English skills, although she managed to retrain herself and find an occupation she enjoyed later. Similarly, some mothers expressed how their lack of English skills had a negative effect on their employment as well as their confidence in finding jobs. For instance, Fang, who had a university degree and used to work as a manager in China, struggled to find a job in England due to her limited English skills, as presented in chapter 6. In these situations women are likely to be forced to take up more gendered roles and identity, owing to their restricted opportunities to get the professional jobs they are qualified for, and that would earn enough to pay for childcare, or even any form of employment at all.

In addition, the loss of familial help might have compounded the gendering of their experiences in England. As stated in chapter 7, it was only two Chinese women (Ping and Hua) who were able to utilise grandparental help. As a result, all the other participants had

to deal with childcare issues on their own with their husbands. Whilst a small number of women (three) were fortunate enough to share it with their husbands ‘equally’, it was largely the women who took up the primary responsibility for childcare, frequently costing their employment opportunities, analogous with the findings of Ho (2006) and Cooke (2007). Furthermore, they might have undergone social isolation as a result of the loss of familial and social networks as well as employment. For instance, Sook’s story in chapter 6 illuminates even more aggravation of migrant women’s isolation and confinement to the house due to a dearth of family and friends, together with the loss of employment status as a consequence of having a child. In these circumstances migrant women might become bound by childcare responsibilities with not many opportunities to go out and meet other people, except waiting for their husbands to return from work. In this the impact of not having paid work on these women should be understood within the specific context of their position as migrants, because the degree of their isolation might differ from non-migrant home-stay mothers who are likely to have more easily available support networks in England. As exemplified in the story of Sook, such a sense of isolation and loneliness could have a detrimental effect on migrant women’s daily lives.

In summary, the intersection of their gender with class and ethnicity underscores rather distinctive experiences for first generation East Asian women in my study, possibly differentiated from other non-migrant mothers in England, owing to their social position as migrants. At the same time, while they might share similarities as migrant women who came from middle-class backgrounds, a number of factors - their ethnic and/or national origin, whether they married East Asian or British men, their association with ethnic and/or British communities and networks, their financial circumstances post-migration – all seem to have played a part in creating divergent experiences among these women.

8.4 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While the findings of this study contribute to casting new light on the experience of East Asian migrant women living in England, they concurrently have a number of limitations.

Firstly, the findings of this study are illustrative of the experiences of a small minority of women in England and thus cannot be seen as representative of all East Asian women in England. Particularly, as I acknowledged in the methodology chapter, this study is limited in representing the experiences of relatively poor and uneducated women because the dominant majority of the participants shared middle-class status with high educational qualifications. This might be the result of the immigration policy of Britain, which requires a certain level of income and occupational status to be allowed to migrate into England or gaining a permanent residential visa (Layton-Henry 2004). Also, this might be that a large number of participants were selected from children's private educational establishments, who are more likely to come from educated, middle-class households which have sufficient finance. Another factor that has affected this outcome might be that I had to select two thirds of the participants (Japanese and Chinese women) who could speak fluent English. Ethnic minority women with good English skills tended to be relatively well educated and middle-class. In addition, the potential time restrictions that working-class mothers may have might have caused this issue because of their participation in paid work. Moreover, some women who migrated with no legal document might have wanted to avoid revealing their identity to strangers. While I was aware of this setback, it was not viable to get access to this group of women this time due to limited time and funding resources. This research is therefore about the experiences of well-educated predominantly middle-class migrant women, as I pointed out previously. Secondly, whilst the accounts of women from China are highly illuminating in terms of the importance of employment in their identity, this might have been the result of the fact that the majority of the Chinese participants were employed. The accounts of home-stay mothers from China might have revealed something very different from what I have presented in this study. On the basis of this, I cannot draw a definite conclusion on the issue of the distinctive working culture of China, different from other East Asian countries, as emerged in the stories of Chinese mothers in this study. Thirdly, my study is limited in that male partners' accounts are absent in my data even if the gendered relations take a very significant place. The exploration of men's accounts alongside their wives' could have been even more interesting and illuminating. Finally, my study is limited in that the majority of the participants were selected from East Asian communities, particularly in the case of the Korean group. Living in a small tight-knit ethnic community could have influenced women's experiences differently from those who did not live in or chose to live away from such a community, especially with regard to the

impact of national and/or ethnic cultural heritage in their formation of motherhood identity. It may also be that the people who are drawn to such communities are more likely to be those who wish to maintain their cultural links and wish to have greater contact with other people of the same ethnicity. In this respect, the differences in the findings could be a reflection of sampling choice. For instance, if I interviewed Japanese participants from a locality where there was a high concentration of Japanese people and a developed 'Japanese Town', then I might have found more people married to Japanese men and gender relations that were more standard.

On the basis of such limitations, future research will benefit by comparing East Asians living within East Asian communities with those who do not. Also, future studies should examine narratives of both men and women, which will offer the opportunity to see how men's and women's accounts differ or are similar in their understanding of gender relations. As discussed above, the participants in my study were relatively homogeneous middle-class women, which made the examination of varied class experiences of East Asian women highly difficult. This might also have affected the findings of this research that highlight the important role their national and/or ethnic cultural heritage played in their experiences of motherhood and identity formation, more so than class. On the basis of this, future research should be more inclusive of women of diverse class backgrounds, such as non-English speaking women with lower educational attainment and job status, which will help improve our understanding of how different class positions affect the experiences of motherhood among first generation East Asian mothers. This means future studies would require hiring a translator(s) or an interviewer(s) with multilingual skills as well as more time to proactively seek out interviewees from a wider array of backgrounds. Future research could also benefit from incorporating participants' feedback into the findings by re-contacting them if it is smaller scale or well resourced, as demonstrated in the studies of Skinner (forthcoming) and Frost et al. (2007).

As discussed earlier, there appears to be similarities and differences in the notion of intensive mothering between Britain and East Asian countries. Predicated upon this, it would be extremely insightful to conduct a comparative study between the experiences of British mothers and those of East Asian mothers, such as Korean or Japanese mothers. This could also highlight how different notions of motherhood and employment have been

developing among these countries with recent development and changes in women's increased participation in the labour market. Also, comparative studies between mothers in China and mothers either in South Korea or in Japan could be immensely useful in fathoming divergences between East Asian countries, especially given the dramatic socio, economic and political changes that have occurred in China. This might have a different impact on women in China today from my participants, the majority of whom spent their life in China between the 1970s and early 2000s. Also, based on the limitations I stated above, there is the need for future research that explores the experiences of both working and non-working mothers in China.

8.5 Summary of Conclusion

As discussed so far, the formation of first generation East Asian mothers' identity is a complex and dynamic process, constructed through the nexus of their national and/or ethnic cultural heritage and their diasporic experiences in England. The stories these women told indicate that their identities are the creation of the interaction between multifarious factors, which cannot be understood properly with a simplistic approach. The intersection of various social relations pointed out diversity among first generation East Asian women in this research, highlighting dynamic and complex characteristics of individual women's identity construction in a transnational context. In this sense, although these women shared a similar gender and ethnic status as well as (in most cases) class, their experiences differed, this being contingent upon their as well as their husbands' national and/or ethnic origin and their connection with ethnic and/or British communities. Consequently, the stories of most of the Japanese women I interviewed, the majority of whom got married to British men, suggest their divergent experiences from the majority of Korean and Chinese women in this study in terms of the gendered division of housework. On the other hand, East Asian women's stories regarding motherhood and employment present us with a different pattern of gendered experiences of women from the division of household labour. For instance, despite the relatively gender equal experiences of the many Japanese women with regard to domestic labour within the family, when it came to the issue of motherhood and employment, it was the accounts of Chinese women that appeared to be based on gender equality as they actively espoused women's participation in paid

work, rather than supporting intensive mothering. This illuminates the complex characteristics of these women's lives. However, their stories also indicate that despite such divergence, the majority of East Asian women in this study continued to be bound by the gender divided norms and practices. These women, therefore, appear to be subject to the gendered notion of motherhood and womanhood, whether they were employed or not.

In conclusion, although there are some limitations, the findings of this study are immensely insightful and illuminating in understanding the lived experiences of first generation East Asian women in England. By opening up a variety of possibilities, this study has created a spring board for opportunities to delve into the lives of East Asian women and enhancing our understanding of their experiences. Also, rather than treating class as almost taken-for-granted or invisible on the basis of the middle-classed experiences of East Asian women in my study, talking about their lives in class terms is believed to showcase a significant approach in understanding intersectionality, as exemplified by the research of Byrne (2006).

Appendix I

Informed Consent Form

The Intersection of Motherhood Identity with Culture and Class: a Qualitative Study of East Asian Mothers in England

The Researcher: Hyun Joo Lim

Supervisor: Dr Tina Skinner

Dear Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project '*The Intersection of Motherhood Identity with Culture and Class: a Qualitative Study of East Asian Mothers in England*'.

This consent form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you an idea of what the project is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more details feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of study: The goal of the project is to explore the subjective experiences of East Asian women with dependent children under the age of 11, with a particular concern for the ways in which their ethnicity and class position have affected their experiences of motherhood.

Your participation in the study: Your participation will involve a biographical interview which will last approximately two hours. I am interested in any issues or experiences you have had as an ethnic minority mother. I would also like you to fill out a brief questionnaire after the interview that will enable me to find out basic information about you.

Risk to you: The research involves discussion of personal experiences and feelings. As such, there might be a danger of invasion of privacy or emotional disturbance. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. If at any stage you feel that you wish to leave the room or take a break from the interview you are free to do so.

Informed consent: Before I can begin the interview, I need your informed consent. You can provide this by reading and signing this form. I will tape the biographical interview only if you give me signed permission to do so. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time, including after the interview begins and after it is finished, until 11 September 2011 (the expected hand-in date for my PhD Project). If you withdraw, any material collected during my contact with you will be destroyed and will not be used in any way in the analysis and writing of the research results. You are free to request more information about the study.

Confidentiality and anonymity: Any information that I collect will remain strictly confidential. Names and identities will be disguised in the final report, and care will be taken to try to ensure that any descriptions of situations or direct quotes cannot be connected to you. In order to preserve anonymity, you may choose your own pseudonym, or, if you prefer, I will choose one for you.

Storage of materials: All materials, including tapes, transcripts of tapes, and any notes I might make, will remain confidential. They will be destroyed 3 years after the research project has finished.

The results: Your interview, and any other material I collect, will be used as the basis for my PhD research project. I may also wish to quote you in future publications, but I will use a pseudonym.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or University of Bath from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to request more information about the study or to withdraw from it at any time prior to the hand in date for the PhD thesis (11 September 2011), and you are also free to refuse to answer any specific questions during the interview. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact me [Hyun Joo Lim (ss3hjl@bath.ac.uk)].

Do you agree to participate in the study according to the conditions outlined above? YES
NO

May I tape record your interview? YES NO

Are you willing to fill out a brief questionnaire after the interview? YES NO

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Interviewer's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix II

Interview questions

I am interested in your experiences as ethnic minority mothers living in England. The main areas I'm interested in are your experiences of employment, migration and motherhood. Please tell me your life stories up until the present time in whichever way you want to, anything that occurs to you in relation to those main areas I mentioned. I won't ask you any questions for now. I will just make some notes on the things that I would like to ask you more about later.

Motherhood

What were your main reasons for having a child(ren)?

Has motherhood affected your feelings about yourself in any way?

What do you think the best things about having a child(ren) are?

What do you think the major effects having a child have on your life are?

How do you think your life would be like if you never had children?

Childcare

What kinds of childcare do you use?

What kind of government support did or do you receive in terms of childcare?

If you were eligible to receive the state or other external support, would you have worked?

Employment

If employed-

Have you ever thought of not working?

What are main reasons for working?

What does your job mean to you?

Has having children affected your perception of your career?

What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of being an employed mother are?

Do you plan to stop working in order to raise your children?

If plans to return to work: How do you think stopping work for a while will affect your chances of finding the kind of job you want?

If not employed currently-

If you worked previously, could you tell me about your last job?

What are the things you feel most important to have in a job, such as advancement, the people you work with, pay, autonomy, the type of work, etc?

When you did work, did working affect your feelings about yourself in any way?

Could you tell me the reasons why you've stopped working?

Do you plan to go back to work at any point in the future?

If never employed-

Have you ever thought about working?

If you went to work, what are the things you feel would be most important to have in a job, such as advancement, the people you work with, pay, autonomy, the type of work, etc?

Ethnicity

Which country or countries do you think you belong to and why?

What kind of food do you and your family eat most of the time?

Have you ever experienced any racism or racial discrimination?

-If yes, could you give me an example.

How do you think your move to Britain has affected your life?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of bringing up your child(ren) in England?

Appendix III

Questionnaire

The Intersection of Motherhood Identity with Culture and Class: a Qualitative Study of East Asian Mothers in England

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your country of origin? If your nationality has changed, please give details
4. How long have you been living in England?
 - 4a. What was the main reason that you came to England?
 - 4b. What is your visa status?
Student visa () Working visa () Limited leave to remain () Indefinite leave to remain (permanent residential permit) () British citizenship () Other, please specify
6. Which is the highest level of educational qualification that you have?
GCSEs () A-Level () Diploma () Bachelor's degree () Master's degree () PhD ()
Other please specify (if you have Asian qualifications, please specify exact qualifications and indicate above what the equivalent is in the UK).
7. Do you have a partner? Yes/No
 - 7a. If yes, what is your partner's country of origin? If his nationality has changed, please give details.
8. What is your partner's occupation?

12. How many children do you have?

13. Please give ages of your children.

14. What is your annual household income?

Less than £20,000 () £20,000-30,000 () £30,000-40,000 () £40,000-50,000 ()
£50,000-60,000 () £60,000-70,000 () £70,000-80,000 () More than £80,000 ()

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix IV

Biographical Details of the Participants by National Origin

Interviewee	Country of origin	Age	Married	Ethnic origin of their partner	Parenting	Employment	Highest educational attainment	Household income	Educational stage of children	Number of children	Reason for immigration	Visa status	Length of stay in England
Nanako	Japan	30s	Yes	British	Primary carer	unemployed	Degree	£ 50,000-£ 60,000	preschool	2	Study	British citizen	Between 16 and 20 years
Harumi	Japan	40s	Yes	Japanese	Primary carer	Full-time PhD student	Master's	Not given	primary	1	Study	Student visa	Less than 5 years
Misa	Japan	40s	Yes	Japanese	Primary carer	Professional part-time	Master's	£ 20,000-£ 30,000	Primary and secondary	2	Study	Provisional residential visa	Less than 5 years
Yumi	Japan	40s	Yes	British	Co-parenting	Professional part-time	Degree	£ 40,000-£ 50,000	primary	2	Study	Permanent residential visa	Between 10 and 15 years
Asuko	Japan	40s	Yes	British	Primary carer	Unemployed	Diploma	£ 30,000-£ 40,000	Preschool and primary	2	Accompany husband	Permanent residential visa	Between 10 and 15 years
Yoko	Japan	20s	Yes	British	Secondary carer	Administrator full-time	Degree	£ 50,000-£ 60,000	Preschool and primary	2	Accompany husband	Permanent residential visa	Between 10 and 15 years
Mika	Japan	40s	Yes	British	Primary carer	Unemployed	Diploma	Not given	Primary	2	Study	Permanent residential visa	Between 10 and 15 years
Mai	Japan	40s	Yes	British	Primary carer	Unemployed	Degree	Less than £ 20,000	Primary and secondary	4	Study	Permanent residential visa	Between 16 and 20 years
Kyoko	Japan	40s	Yes	British	Primary carer	Unemployed	Degree	£ 40,000-£ 50,000	Primary	2	Study	Permanent residential visa	Between 10 and 15 years
Tomomi	Japan	40s	Yes	British	Secondary carer	Administrator full-time	Degree	£ 20,000-£ 30,000	Primary	2	Study	Permanent residential visa	Between 10 and 15 years

Interviewee	Country of origin	Age	Married	Ethnic origin of their partner	Parenting	Employment	Highest educational attainment	Household income	Educational stage of children	Number of children	Reason for immigration	Visa status	Length of stay in England
Jina	South Korea	40s	Yes	Korean	Primary carer	Unemployed	Degree	Over £ 80,000	Preschool and primary	2	Accompany husband	Dependant visa	Less than 5 years
Seyoun	South Korea	30s	Yes	Korean	Primary carer	Unemployed	Master's	£ 70,000-£ 80,000	Primary	2	Accompany husband	Dependant visa	Less than 5 years
Mijung	South Korea	30s	Yes	Korean	Primary carer	Unemployed	Degree	£ 30,000-£ 40,000	Primary	2	Accompany husband	Permanent residential visa	Between 5 and 9 years
Miri	South Korea	40s	Yes	Korean	Primary carer	Running small business Full-time	Master's	Not given	Primary and secondary	2	Accompany husband	Dependant visa	Between 5 and 9 years
Hojin	South Korea	30s	Yes	Korean	Primary carer	Running small business Full-time	A level	£ 50,000-£ 60,000	Preschool	2	Have Better life	Working visa	Between 5 and 9 years
Sunmi	South Korea	20s	Yes	Korean	Primary carer	Skilled manual Part-time	A level	£ 20,000-£ 30,000	Pregnant and preschool	3	Study	Permanent residential visa	Between 5 and 9 years
Minju	South Korea	30s	Yes	Korean	Primary carer	Unemployed	Degree	Less than £ 20,000	Primary	3	Study	Permanent residential visa	Between 10 and 15 years
Han	South Korea	30s	Yes	Korean	Primary carer	Unemployed	Master's	Over £ 80,000	Primary	1	Accompany husband	Dependant visa	Between 5 and 9 years
Heji	South Korea	40s	Yes	Korean	Primary carer	Unemployed	Master's	£ 60,000-£ 70,000	Preschool	2	Study	Working visa	Between 10 and 15 years
Sook	South Korea	30s	Yes	British	Primary carer	Unemployed	Degree	£ 30,000-£ 40,000	Preschool	1	Accompany husband	Temporary residential visa	Between 5 and 9 years

Interviewee	Country of origin	Age	Married	Ethnic origin of their partner	Parenting	Employment	Highest educational attainment	Household income	Educational stage of children	Number of children	Reason for immigration	Visa status	Length of stay in England
Hua	China	30s	Yes	Chinese	Primary carer	Professional full-time	PhD	Not given	Preschool and Primary	2	Accompany husband	British citizen	Between 10 and 15 years
Lang	China	40s	Yes	British	Primary carer	Professional full-time	PhD	Over £ 80,000	Preschool	2	Study	British citizen	Between 10 and 15 years
Ping	China	40s	Yes	Chinese	Primary carer	Professional part-time	Degree	Not given	Primary and secondary	2	Accompany husband	Permanent residential visa	Between 16 and 20 years
Jia	China	40s	Yes	Chinese	Primary carer	Running small business Full-time	Diploma	£ 50,000-£ 60,000	Primary	1	Accompany husband	Permanent residential visa	Less than 5 years
Lucy	China	30s	Yes	Chinese	Primary carer	Shop assistant Part-time	Degree	Less than £ 20,000	Preschool	2	Accompany husband	Permanent residential visa	Between 5 and 9 years
Chen	China	30s	Yes	Chinese	Primary carer	Professional Part-time	Master's	Less than £ 20,000	Preschool and secondary	2	Gaining wider experience	Permanent residential visa	Between 5 and 9 years
Fang	China	30s	Yes	Chinese	Primary carer	Unemployed	Degree	£ 20,000-£ 30,000	Primary	1	Daughter's education	Working visa	Less than 5 years
Bian	China	30s	Yes	British	Primary carer	Unemployed	Degree	Not given	Preschool and primary	2	Accompany husband	Permanent residential visa	Between 5 and 9 years
Beth	Hong Kong	30s	Yes	Chinese	Primary carer	Professional part-time	Master's	Not given	Preschool and 2 primary	3	Study	British citizen	Between 10 and 15 years
Hailey	Hong Kong	30s	Yes	Chinese	Primary carer	Unemployed	Degree	£ 50,000-£ 60,000	Preschool and primary	2	Study	British citizen	Between 16 and 20 years

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